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Women and Indians in the 1800s : captivity narratives as fact and fiction

Julie Rehbock
San Jose State University

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Rehbock, Julie, M.A.

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U·M·I
300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

WOMEN AND INDIANS IN THE 1800s:
CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES AS FACT AND FICTION

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Julie Rehbock

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APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Dr. Billie Jensen

Dr. Barbara Dubins

Dr. Richard Cramer

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

WOMEN AND INDIANS IN THE 1800S:

CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES AS FACT AND FICTION

by Julie Rehbock

The American captivity narrative genre spanned three hundred years, and evolved from generally fact based, religiously interpreted tracts in the sixteen hundreds to highly fictionalized pulp thrillers in the later eighteen hundreds. While describing experiences of white Euro-Americans taken captive by native Americans the narratives at times served as a means of moral instruction or as anti-Indian propaganda. Although the historical veracity of the narratives of the eighteen hundreds may be questioned, the narratives reveal a view into American values, attitudes and popular culture. The captivity narratives written by and about women were particularly well received by the reading public. These narratives offer a view of the attitudes these women held toward the native, the frontier, and their lives.

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CHAPTER I

THE CAPTIVITY NARRATIVE:

1600s-1800s

Most often the conflict between native and Euro-American is written in terms of big events and their effects on the lives of many people. But the meeting of these two groups is also written on a more individual, personal level in the hundreds of stories of Indian captivity from the 1600s to the latter 1800s. In the narratives are stories of first hand experiences among various native American tribes, providing valuable ethnographic information as well as reflections of the attitudes and values of their authors and time. There are tales of unsuccessful captures, captives who stayed with their captors and those who escaped. These tales of sensational, sometimes brutal experiences at the hands of "heathen" Indians[1] were not only best sellers of their time but became vehicles of religious propaganda, racism, and destruction of the native American. While captivity narratives were certainly not unique to America

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[1]Words such as heathen, savage, pagan and Indian as used here referring to native Americans carry many stereotypes, some quite negative. They reflect both historical terminology and the attitudes generally regarded the various indigenous peoples of North America and are therefore used in that context. Wherever possible and appropriate specific tribal names will be used.

the Indian captivity narratives developed into a unique literary genre that was one of the first, if not the first, truly American forms of literature. While telling individual stories the captivities also document the change in American culture and what has been noted by James Hart as "the century's general shift from religious to political interests." An examination of the Indian captivity narratives from the 1600s through the 1800s reveals the evolution of American thought as the narrative shifted from largely religious accounts of trials and tribulations, to the stories of oppression by Indians allied with the French or Spanish, to finally the pulp thriller.[2]

Narratives written by female captives had a particularly unique place within the captivity narrative genre. Women, perceived as weak and most vulnerable to the savagery of the Indian also became most widely exploited for their value to arouse and elicit sentiments of racial hatred while demonstrating what was perceived as the Indian's true inclination towards barbarism and cruelty. While narratives by both men and women offer interesting and valuable ethnographic information and Euro-American attitudes towards the Indian, the narratives by women are important for another reason. While history is most often told through

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[2]James Hart, The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste (Berkeley: University of California Press,1950; reprint, 1963), 41 (page references are to reprint edition).

the actions of men here we have stories of women's lives on the American frontier and a view of American history and culture from this female perspective. Far from weak and submissive many women not only displayed their strength and perseverance under adverse situations but wrote of their experiences expressing their attitudes and opinions of Indians, and their own lives on the frontier.

The earliest American captivity narratives emerged out of the Puritan New World experience. Determined to build a new Zion in the wilderness of America, the Indian captivities and the narratives they inspired punctuated a time of internal stress among the Puritan community. Puritan clergymen, most notably Cotton Mather, accused these second generation New World Puritans of a lapse in their faith and determination towards their goal. The Indian captivities were interpreted as admonishment giving direction, and the warning of what could happen when Puritan ways were not heeded. While early narratives were firsthand accounts of actual experiences Puritan preachers quickly realized the captivity narratives' potential as a metaphor of the Puritan world view and mission in the New World. The hand of Puritan clergymen's editorial hand can be seen in many of these narratives. The Indian became symbolic for the devil, the wilderness he lived in the obstacle Puritans were determined to conquer. As a means of propaganda the narratives also promoted Indian or French hatred, expressing

the "community's sense of meaning of the experience, rationalizing its actions and moving the people to action."[3] Mary Rowlandson's narrative of her eleven week captivity in 1676 became not only a best seller, reprinted over thirty times, but also served as archetype for future narratives.

By the early 1700s a change had begun to occur in the captivity narratives. Elizabeth Hanson's narrative of 1724 marks the end of the Puritan narratives and the beginning of a more secular response to Indian captivity, and a more "conscious literary attempt to arouse the readers sentiments."[4] Hanson's narrative and those after are not directed towards the redemption of the community as were Puritan narratives, but are offered for a more personal reading and evaluation. These narratives, as those of the 1600s, offer many details of native life, foods, customs, and travel during this early period of American history. In "the latter half of the eighteenth century it had become more and more customary to work up the narrative into something exciting and journalistically worthwhile . . . ."[5] The narratives of the 1700s strongly reflect the Euro-

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[3]Richard Van Der Beets, Held Captive by the Indians (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1973), 96.

[4]Alden Vaughan & Edward Clark, eds. Puritans Among the Indians (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1981), 24.

[5]Roy Harvey Pearce, "The Significance of the Captivity Narrative," American Literature 19 (March 1947): 13.

American change in attitudes and relationships with both the frontier and the native inhabitants.

In the 1800s a very distinct Indian policy had been defined involving the systematic removal of tribes onto reservations in the West. The Indian was now perceived most clearly as hampering the "rightful" expansion of Americans westward. In 1824 'Monroe presented a plan to Congress on "civilizing the Indians" by removing them to the West.'[6] By the mid 1800s most tribes east of the Mississippi had in fact been moved to reservations further west.

These new tensions between native and white America are readily visible in the narratives of this period. While one must always be suspicious when reading captivity narratives for their veracity, this becomes especially so in the 1800s. The captivity narratives of the 1800s were often little more than vehicles for the perpetuation of racism and destruction of the native, and their content often was fictional. Their situations were fact but the telling became highly suspect. The female captives during this period were taken by tribes far different from those of the northeast. Not only were their customs different but their attitudes towards women were considerably different from the eastern tribes, who if not holding women in high esteem certainly recognized their importance within their

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[6]Richard Drinnon, Facing West (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 115.

societies. Just as whites' attitudes and actions had changed towards the Indian, the Indian had reacted in kind. Captives were frequently taken in a rage, out of revenge for real or perceived wrongs, with the Indians intending to kill all the whites.

The following narratives are but a handful of the many captivity narratives written during the nineteenth century. They stand as representative of the encounters white women experienced as captives of native American tribes during this period. Most of the narratives included were written by the female captives themselves, upon their return, occasionally many years later. A number of the narratives, while dealing with female captives were written by male authors, from interviews or journals of the captives. For a large part it can only be speculated what additional interpretation they brought to the narratives, but even these narratives, written by male authors, can offer much information on the female perspective of the native American and the frontier, as well as the way in which the nineteenth century male society perceived the female captives' experiences.

CHAPTER II

SIOUX CAPTIVITIES:

1857-1867

The Sioux tribes covered much of the Midwest and the Plains of the United States and were accordingly affected by President Andrew Jackson's approval of an act by Congress on May 28, 1830 to "provide for an exchange of lands with the Indians residing within any of the states or territories, for their removal west of the river Mississippi."[1] Tribes living just west of the Mississippi not only felt pressure from the displaced tribes moving westward but also from the many emigrants who had been granted homesteads by Congress before any title had been given up by the various tribes. A number of hostile incidents needlessly followed throughout the 1800s. Two, in particular, are noted as the bloodiest of the Sioux attacks during this period, the Spirit Lake Massacre of 1857 in Iowa, and the Sioux Uprising of 1862 in Minnesota. While it is necessarily difficult to know fully and accurately what instigated these attacks and what occurred during them, the following gives a brief account of what is surmised to have taken place.

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[1]Fred Hans, The Great Sioux Nation (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Ross and Haines, Inc., 1964), 469.

In March of 1857 a small band of Sioux, returning from a hunting expedition, was fired upon by a group of white settlers. They moved on, cold and hungry, and reached Spirit Lake where they requested food and shelter from the white settlers living there. The Sioux received neither but were again fired upon. The ensuing fight resulted in forty whites killed and four women taken captive. Only two were to survive their captivities.

As an increasing number of homesteaders moved into Minnesota, the more eastern Sioux tribes, already transplanted to west of the Mississippi were again driven from their possessions. The Sioux lands were ceded to the United States government with promises of goods and payments to maintain their tribe. By 1861 the Sioux were destitute and on the verge of starvation, their hunting grounds had been affected by the growth of the settlements, and neither their summer nor winter annuities arrived that year. Those who made it through that winter did not fare much better the following year. The incident which apparently stirred the Sioux to action involved four young Sioux men who attempted to steal some chickens from a neighboring white settler. Caught in the act, a fight ensued and there were deaths of both white and Sioux. While initially, on August 18th, the Sioux planned to get provisions or items they could trade for food, with the violence already started Chief Little Crow decided that now was the time to deal with the white

settlers in a way they would not soon forget. Accordingly, at Fort Ridgeley all the outer buildings were burned to the ground. New Ulm saw a violent attack "where the men were slain and the white women, numbering more than a hundred, were carried into captivity."[2] Settlers throughout the county were affected by the attacks. "Reports indicated that about six hundred men and boys of the settlements were slain, and some one hundred and twenty-five women and girls taken into captivity by the Sioux."[3] Within two or three months approximately one hundred of the captives had been returned. When peace returned the citizens of Minnesota demanded the execution of every Indian the army could capture. Of four hundred Sioux brought to the Army commission for investigation of the Minnesota Uprising atrocities, three hundred were condemned to be hanged, twenty sentenced to imprisonment with the remainder to be released. President Abraham Lincoln ordered an investigation as well. Against the desires of many Americans in the East as well as those in Minnesota, the investigation determined that only thirty nine of the cases reported were to be executed, the remainder were pardoned and released. Friends of the Indian, both in the East and the frontier felt the decision was just. Those tried by the

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[2]Ibid., 485.

[3]Ibid., 486.

commission had surrendered themselves and the murderers and rapists had fled north to Canada or further west.

During these two attacks many captives, mostly women and children, were taken by the Sioux. Although many endured physical and mental torture, the majority escaped or were released at the end of the hostilities. Several of these captives wrote of their experiences among the Sioux. Many of the narratives were published as serials in newspapers and magazines or in book form.

The following thirteen narratives of women captives take place over a ten year period, 1857 to 1867. The majority occur in Minnesota during the Sioux Uprising, only one of the two survivors of the Spirit Lake Massacre wrote her story. One narrative, that of 1867, intriguingly begins in a marriage of a white woman to a Sioux chief in her efforts to Christianize the Sioux. The captives are both young and old, from children to mothers with children. While certain themes seem to appear throughout the narratives they are not carbon copies of one another. Many of the circumstances are repeated from one narrative to the next but the stories of the ordeals are for the most part individual. Most narratives are based on fact although some are laced with fiction. Their interpretations of the initial attacks do not generally concur with what has been previously outlined but this can be easily attributed to the writers' sentiments towards their Indian attackers as well

as what must have been the general chaos of their situations. Adding to problems of accuracy is the fact that many of these narratives were written as much as thirty five years after their captivities, often with thoughts other than historical accuracy in mind.

ABIGAIL GARDINER

> . . . with all the warm and pleasing prospects of youth thus nipped off in the bud and nothing to look forward to but vague horrors perhaps greater than those of the past, her situation was one of indescribable affliction.[4]

Abigail Gardiner was one of the two survivors of the 1857 Spirit Lake Massacre in Iowa. She was fourteen at the time of her captivity and remained three months with the Sioux. While the narrative is not written in her own words it comes from the report she gave upon her return to white settlement. The narrative was written with a two-fold purpose, one, that readers in the "older and more settled States may better appreciate the blessings of Peace and Civilization . . ." and two, that Abigail Gardiner might profit from its circulation.[5] It is interesting to note that the Superintendent of the State Historical Society of Iowa, in the 1971 Introduction to a reprinting of Gardiner's narrative, seems to have similar sentiments as those of the

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[4]L. P. Lee, History of the Spirit Lake Massacre and the Captivity of Abigail Gardiner (New York: Garland Publishers, 1977), 18.

[5]Ibid., Preface.

author in 1857. He ignores the facts surrounding the "massacre" which cause many historians to view Gardiner's narrative with some skepticism for its sometimes frenzied tone. He writes "when it is recalled the Sioux Indians had given up their rights to this land in 1851, the action of these renegades becomes even more reprehensible."[6] The author goes on to note, unhappily, the lack of sympathy given the victims of the massacre by Easterners while those in the West understood all too well the dangers of the frontier. The author of Abigail Gardiner's narrative commented on the state of the native Americans; acknowledging that they have indeed been driven from their lands, and

> suffered everything from the hands of the whites that a strong and proud race ever inflicted on weak neighbors, are naturally exasperated, and . . . , long to become the perpetrators, instead of the victims of extermination.[7]

But the major blame is laid on the half-bloods who have disgraced the white race while clearing the "track for the car of human progress."[8] All that the whites have given to the Indian is liquor, and that in order to make the Indians' removal hastened. The author continues by mentioning that the Indians of America are owed whites' benevolence because

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[6]Ibid., Introduction.

[7]Ibid., 13.

[8]Ibid., 14.

they have given up their best territory which they possessed by natural right. The somewhat sympathetic tone of the narrative quickly changes to the discussion of the "infestation of savages in the West . . . entirely ignorant of the arts of civilization or the morality of religion."[9]

The Spirit Lake Massacre, carried out by fourteen persons, members of a small band of Sioux led by Ink-pa-du-ta, was instigated when "one Indian unexpectedly walked into the house, and begged for a morsel of bread!"[10] They were given food, but there was not enough thus causing the Indians to attack. Abigail Gardiner, during the attack remained calm, motionless and quiet, attributes that according to the author were to save her life a number of times. All of her family was killed save one sister who was away at the time. Forty white persons in all were killed during the massacre; four were taken captive.

The author notes the precarious situation in which Abigail Gardiner found herself, but her fears lay in not knowing what would be her fate, scalping, starvation, desertion "or the more welcome gun-shot . . . ."[11] A few weeks after her capture Abigail Gardiner was "made" into an Indian. Her hair is oiled and her face painted. It is also

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[9]Ibid., 15.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid., 18.

mentioned that her shoes were taken away and she was given moccasins. "These proved warm and comfortable for walking in winter, and (no doubt contrary to the wishes of the Indians,) were better for them than shoes."[12] After the adoption of the Indian costumes by the captives their hardships were increased. Abigail Gardiner was now made to carry the burden of other squaws. She was also made "to bear up against continual threats of death. For every night she was compelled to comply with the orders of her tyrant, [and deal with] the threat that she would be killed the next morning!"[13] The reader is not given specific detail so does not know whether the reference is indicating Miss Gardiner was subjected to rape or merely household duties. It was not uncommon for an editor to omit instances of rape or to cloak them in other terminology. It is stated that she was made to carry a heavy burden, haul water, cut wood, help pitch tents, and cook, all basic duties of a Sioux squaw. Two white captives were killed for not complying with their captors' orders. In spite of all her hardships there is only one instance when Abigail Gardiner's thoughts turn to escape, and nothing becomes of it beyond a thought.

Mrs. Noble, a fellow captive, was rescued when she was bought by two Lac-qui-parle Indians and taken to St. Paul

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[12]Ibid., 30.

[13]Ibid., 21-22.

where the Indians received $1000; and they reported Abigail Gardiner's whereabouts. Some two months after the massacre three Lac-qui-parle were sent out to ransom Abigail Gardiner. Her captors objected to selling her feeling they could receive a higher price in Missouri or from military officers. Abigail Gardiner was eventually sold to these three for two horses, seven blankets, two kegs of powder, a box of tobacco and other items that were provided by a Major Flandrau. The three Indians were paid $1200 for their services. The Governor of Iowa made plans to capture and kill the band of Sioux and soon Ink-pa-du-ta's body was found repeatedly bayonetted. The Sioux living peacefully in the area were quite displeased with his murder and the treatment of those who took part in the Massacre. But the author noted if not pleasure, a sense of justice in Ink-pa-du-ta's death, hoping he "can rely on a mental 'amen' from every reader, to the wish, So may perish all the participators in the fiendish crimes of Ink-pa-du-ta's band!"[14] As an addendum to the narrative, the 1971 reprinting also includes military correspondence and newspaper clippings from the period before the attack, noting that because Ink-pa-du-ta's son had recently been killed by whites and the Sioux's annuities had not been paid, problems with the Sioux could be expected.

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[14]Ibid., 48.

Interestingly these warnings came only days before the massacre took place.

After her return, Abigail Gardiner was given a war cap on behalf of a Yankton Sioux chief to show his love for the whites. A war cap is made of feathers, one for each scalp taken by its possessor—a curious gift for a young girl who witnessed her family's death and was then held captive for three months. Abigail Gardiner was later placed in a seminary where she could receive an education.

LAVINIA EASTLICK

> No one can imagine my feelings. I wished I could die. I thought then, and think now, that they were torturing children. It was a great punishment to me to hear the children crying and moaning under the cruel tortures of the Indians. I thought they were my children that I heard.[15]

Lavinia Eastlick and her husband were one of many couples who went to Minnesota to claim homesteads. The Eastlicks had moved five times, each move taking them further towards the western frontier. In 1861 they settled at Lake Shetek, Minnesota. Lavinia Eastlick's story takes place during the Great Sioux Uprising of 1862.

On August 18th of 1862 many families along Lake Shetek were aroused by the news that the Sioux had killed a number of whites and were going to continue their attack, it was rumored, until all the whites in Minnesota were killed. The

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[15]Frederick Drimmer, ed. Captured by the Indians (New York; Dover Publications, Inc, 1961), 322.

Eastlicks and others left their homes to meet in safety at a neighbor's house. There were six Sioux living around this neighbor's house. Mrs. Eastlick apparently felt from the outset that these six could not be trusted. As those outside began to attack she noticed that two or three of the "friendly" Indians inside did not fire.

> I told Mr. Smith and my husband that should they fire again, to let the Indians fire first. I feared that they wished the men to fire and then would turn and shoot them before they could reload."[16]

Fearing the worst her husband gave her a knife which she stated she certainly would use if the Indians came in. At her husband's direction Lavinia Eastlick left the house to hide in a swamp nearby. During her flight from the house Lavinia Eastlick was shot in the heel; her husband was shot and killed. While hiding there, one of the "friendly" Indians urged the women out, stating that he wanted them as his wives. Lavinia recommended to the other women that someone should go out who knew the Sioux language; she did not. The Indians also stated that they would not kill any of the women and children, even though those hiding had already seen women and children, many their own, shot and killed.

Lavinia Eastlick's narrative is not fully a captivity narrative as she spends the time after the attack hiding and running from the Sioux. Her narrative is somewhat

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[16]Ibid., 317.

disjointed in its description of how she escaped the Sioux and in the whereabouts of her children during her journey back to white settlement. It is interesting to note that many of the narratives lack thorough descriptions of the activities and whereabouts of the children of the captive. Often the children were separated from their mothers but this is neither always clear nor always the case. The tone of Lavinia Eastlick's narrative echoes the sentiments and describes the occurrences found in many of the captivity narratives. She describes her journey back to white settlement in detail. Fifteen days after the initial attack Lavinia Eastlick made her way, alone, to New Ulm. On her way she met a mail carrier who had not heard of the uprising and at first meeting he thought Lavinia Eastlick was an Indian squaw. "I could not blame him for thinking I was an Indian, for I had on an old ragged coat and an apron over my head."[17] She found the town empty of people and guarded by soldiers. Upon arriving at a settlement nearby she was welcomed and her wounds tended to; Lavinia Eastlick had not only been shot in the heel but during her escape she had also been shot in the head and back. She later decided to go to Ohio to live with friends but was without means to get there. Governor Ramsey, of Minnesota, gave her $15 for fare for her two children and herself.

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[17]Ibid., 324.

SOPHIA HUGGINS

> But who can tell the story of that hour? of the massacre of helpless women and children, imploring mercy from those whom their own hands had fed, but whose blood-dripping hatchets the next moment crashed pitilessly through their flesh and bone- . . . .[18]

Sophia Huggins' narrative, written in 1864, was not written by Sophia Huggins herself, and there is no indication of its author's name. It is filled with many specific incidents and comments by Sophia Huggins and can be assumed to have been written from interviews with Sophia Huggins as was the case with a number of narratives. The author identifies himself as a historian. He notes there are few narratives "that are chronicled by the pen of the historian, and among these we present the narrative of Mrs. Sophia Josephine Huggins."[19]

Sophia Huggins lived near Lac-qui-Parle, Minnesota, with her husband, a missionary. The uprising which began at the lower Agency did not reach the settlement around the lake until August 19th. Sophia Huggins noted she initially thought it was the Chippewas, who were old enemies of the whites, and not the Sioux, who were relatively friendly to the whites, who were attacking the settlements. A number of Sioux rushed into her house telling her to leave, saying they would not harm her. Her husband was killed in the

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[18]Mrs. Huggins, the Minnesota Captive (New York: Garland Publishers, 1977), 22-23.

[19]Ibid., 5.

initial foray on the 19th. Mrs. Huggins along with her children and a friend went with a Sioux friend, De Cota, to his home. Later they were taken to a safer home.

> As they passed through the village they attracted no little attention. The majority seemed disposed to be friendly, and the women, for a wonder, were respectful, and even sympathetic. Their lords, on the contrary, seemed to pay no attention at all to them.[20]

Although with an Indian friend, they were not safe. Details of the massacre of the day before reached Sophia Huggins and those around her. The main message, that the Sioux involved in the uprising intended death to every white, aggravated the Sioux living around Lac-qui-Parle. Sophia Huggins was told to dress as an Indian and she would be safe. Six weeks passed as Sophia Huggins consoled herself with a Bible that had once belonged to her husband. She attempted to observe Sundays but found with her sense of time confused that she was occasionally observing a Monday. "With tact and judgement, Sophia Huggins endeavored to conform to the tastes of those around her. By this means she endeared herself to them . . . ."[21]

When a large number of Sioux warriors arrived at the camp the women of the village hid Sophia Huggins and her two children.

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[20]Ibid., 7.

[21]Ibid., 9.

> Such large numbers were roving about the village, and passed so close to her that she was in imminent danger of discovery; but the same kind Providence that had brought her through such a labyrinth of perils, did not forsake her.[22]

Soon the news reached the camp that all the Indians who did not flee north would be killed by the soldiers. Thus informed, the entire village began the journey northward. But word soon came to Sophia Huggins, in a letter from Colonel Sibley, that he was near Lac-qui-Parle and had sent for Mrs. Huggins. The very next morning she was escorted by friendly Indians to the soldiers. The chief and she "exchanged affectionate farewells, for both parties had learned to respect and love one another."[23] In many ways Sophia Huggins' narrative is also not that of a captive as she was residing with Sioux friends. It could be said that she was captive by the surrounding circumstances which made it impossible for her to leave for white settlement.

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[22]Ibid., 11.

[23]Ibid., 14.

> I asked myself, have these Indians lived quietly so long, and never, until this late day, done any wrong towards the whites? I could not think of any other cause than this- it may be right, it may be wrong; but such is my belief-: That our own people, not the Indians, were to blame.[24]

Sarah Wakefield wrote her narrative not for the public viewing, or to make money, but for her children, who were very young at the time of her captivity, and "to vindicate myself, as I have been grievously abused by many, who are ignorant of the particulars of my captivity and release by the Indians." Sarah Wakefield strongly admonished her "own people," the whites, for having been so delinquent in obtaining her release while the Sioux saved her "from death and dishonor."[25]

In June of 1861 Sarah Wakefield's husband was appointed physician for the Sioux at Yellow Medicine, Minnesota. Upon their arrival at the lower Agency Sarah Wakefield's reaction was one of having "really got out of civilization . . . ."[26] Since she was "ignorant of Indian customs," the first night was one of horror to Sarah Wakefield as the Sioux were holding councils with much talking and shouting throughout the night. She soon adapted

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[24]Sarah Wakefield, Six Weeks in Sioux Tepees (New York: Garland Publishers, 1977), 40.

[25]Ibid., Preface.

[26]Ibid., 3.

herself to her surroundings and stated she found herself very happy. She didn't really find fault with the Sioux in the retrospect of writing her narrative. "All the evil habits that the Indian has acquired may be laid to the traders."[27] She further states "if all these Indians had been properly fed and otherwise treated like human beings, how many, very innocent lives might have been spared."[28] Sarah Wakefield's narrative is one of the few of those included in this work that were found to show if not affection at least a general understanding and sympathy towards the Sioux and the reasons surrounding the uprising. She described the lack of food as well as the lateness of their annuity payments as major reasons for the Sioux attack. Other narratives often mention these circumstances but tend to blame what they consider the Sioux's natural propensity for savagery and violence as the cause of the uprising. She was so sympathetic towards the Sioux that, "people blame me for having sympathy for these creatures . . . ."[29]

Sarah Wakefield was taken to an Indian encampment of approximately two hundred people. Many of the Sioux recognized her, and as they were old friends they felt sorry

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[27]Ibid., 7.

[28]Ibid., 8.

[29]Ibid., 10.

for her situation. She helped in preparing for the Indians' departure, hoping to gain the friendship of those she did not know. As was the case with other captives, Sarah Wakefield "was changed from a white woman into a squaw. How humiliating it was to adopt such a dress, even forced by such circumstances!"[30]

Sarah Wakefield was told during her captivity that she would be killed but her children would live, and when they were grown they could be ransomed for a large sum. She then decided she would kill her children "rather than leave them with these savages. I ran to a squaw, begged her knife, caught up my little girl, and in a moment would have cut her throat, when a squaw said it was false."[31] Threatened with death a number of times, she was saved by friendly Sioux. Of one man who came to her aid she said

> He has suffered death, but God will reward him in Heaven for his acts of kindness towards me . . . . Very few Indians, or even white men, would have treated me in the manner he did. I was in his power, and why did he not abuse me? Because he knew it was a sin . . . .[32]

At one point during her captivity Sarah Wakefield tried to strike a deal with the Sioux, telling them that if they would spare her life she would help kill the other captives. "I also promised never to leave his Band, and

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[30]Ibid., 16.

[31]Ibid., 17.

[32]Ibid., 28.

that I would sew, chop wood, chop wood, and be like a squaw. I was so frightened that I really did not know what I was saying, nor did I care . . . ."[33]

Sarah Wakefield met with Jannette De Camp Sweet, whose narrative is also included here. "She was very unhappy, and begged me to ask her people to give her a squaw dress, as I could speak Dakota. She was very filthy and so were her children."[34] Sarah Wakefield told Jannette De Camp Sweet she wasn't dealing properly with the Indians, that the Indians were giving her the best they had, and that her crying and complaining made the Indians impatient with her.

During one death threat when the Indians had decided to kill all the whites in the camp Sarah Wakefield told them she had Indian blood in her, which, in fact, she did not.

> I then asked her if she did remember how very dark my mother was, when she became convinced, I was sure this half-breed woman would tell it around, and I would be spared. I know it was wrong to tell such falsehoods, but I felt as if my God knew my thoughts and he would pardon me for doing as I did.[35]

Sarah Wakefield found no kind words for General Sibley who headed the troops sent to put down the uprising and save the captives. She believed he had caused the troops to waste precious time doing things in a military fashion

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[33]Ibid., 30.

[34]Ibid., 37.

[35]Ibid., 43.

instead of rescuing the captives. It is to God and the Indians she gave her thanks.

> The time taken to intrench themselves, passed in marching, would have brought them to our relief; out [sic] God watched over us, and kept those savages back. To him I give all the honor and glory; Sibley I do not even thank, for he deserved it not.[36]

Sarah Wakefield also chastised Sibley for putting on trial friendly Indians, who had willingly given up captives, while letting Little Crow, one of the main perpetrators, and other murderers, slip away. General Sibley and his troops never did capture any of the Sioux who fled, only those who gave up willingly. The Sioux did this she said, preferring captivity with the whites to starvation while running away.

Later during the investigations Sarah Wakefield testified for Chaska, her Sioux friend. In spite of her testimony, and although his name was on the President's list of those to be pardoned, he was hanged. The whites thought it strange that Sarah Wakefield would testify for an Indian. They began saying she must have been Chaska's wife, that she preferred living among the Indians, "and all such horrid, abominable reports." In her own defense she said she could never "love a savage, although I could respect any or all that might befriend me . . . ."[37] To the charges of abuse

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[36]Ibid., 48.

[37]Ibid., 55.

by the Sioux she stated that she knew of only two women who were mistreated in that manner.

ANN COLESON

> Those who prate of the beauties of a state of nature, should live among the Indians and see savage life as I have seen it, I think they would become quite disgusted with it as I did.[38]

Ann Coleson's narrative was written in 1865 and although it was taken directly from a journal Ann Coleson wrote, the narrative is interspersed with descriptions and comments from an anonymous author. Her captivity is not from the Sioux Uprising of August 18, 1862, but is part of the general violence that occurred from August 1862 through the early part of the following year.

Ann Coleson lived with her family, mother, two brothers, and a sister near New Ulm, Minnesota. In January of 1863 their house was attacked by a straggling party of forty-eight Sioux Indians. During the attack "Ann was immediately secured, stripped entirely naked, and subjected to the most horrible of personal outrages . . . ."[39] There is no further explanation of this statement but one may assume from this that Ann Coleson was raped.

On their journey north the captives were beaten and tortured if they could not keep pace,

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[38]Miss Coleson's Narrative (New York: Garland Publishers, 1977), 43.

[39]Ibid., 21.

> they would sear the tenderest parts of the victim's body with lighted pine torches, tear out the entrails and pluck off the scalp . . . . Thus, the number of captives gradually diminished, and before morning all the more delicate, and the children had perished.[40]

Her mother and sister were killed in the initial attack, and Ann Coleson was soon separated from her brothers as the various captors claimed their captives. Within a day of her capture she was given Indian dress. Ann Coleson, was, overall, treated as a squaw, made to "perform their drudgery." The Sioux women attempted to teach her how to make her clothing but she did not fare well. She was surprised to learn that she was intended as a wife for her captor and stated

> it will be readily concluded that I objected to this arrangement, though I willingly consented to prepare his food and keep his wigwam in order, which was no slight job . . . .[41]

Much of her narrative describes the journey north through the snow and adverse conditions but

> not withstanding the pain in my limbs, and the fatigue of drawing my sledge, I could not help remarking on the loveliness of nature peculiar to these northern latitudes.[42]

Although Ann Coleson had heard of captives made to run the gauntlet and other tortures, she and her fellow captives were spared.

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[40]Ibid., 23.

[41]Ibid., 35.

[42]Ibid., 34.

> Men, women and children seemed rather to regard us as objects of curiosity than malignancy and hatred; they ran about us, screeching and yelling, while the boldest came very near and examined our hands, our clothes, our hair and our faces, with the utmost minuteness . . . .[43]

Although her fellow captives are mentioned infrequently she comments on several white children who had been adopted into the tribe and notes they were fast losing "all traces of civilization."[44]

Ann Coleson's narrative interestingly discusses the influence of the Southern states which, she noted, had sent emissaries to stir up rebellion against the United States among the Sioux. These Southerners brought gifts of blankets, rifles, ammunition, and tobacco in the name of "Jefferson Davis, whom they had learned to style their Great Father."[45] She also noted the lack of annuity payments as part of the cause for the Sioux rebellion as well as the withdrawal of troops giving the Sioux opportunity for the revolt.

Ann Coleson found very little redeeming about her captors. She stated she had

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[43]Ibid.

[44]Ibid., 35.

[45]Ibid., 36.

> each day a feeling of deeper disgust with all that I saw. The men were brutal, while the most deplorable want of chastity characterized the women. Even the little children were deficient in the usual grace and sweetness of childhood . . . .[46]

When the news came to the Sioux that a detachment of U. S. troops were on their way to retrieve the captives and punish the Sioux, the Indians realized their only chance was to flee north. At the thought of having "to carry my master's tent, or drag all the furniture and cooking utensils that it contained, or drag the sledge on which they were placed, I determined" to escape that very night.[47]

Ann Coleson was able to escape that night as the Sioux took up their journey northward. But she had not thought out her escape thoroughly. "In my anxiety to escape, I had scarcely calculated on the thousand dangers with which I should be environed when once left to my own resources."[48] During her escape she met a white man who had also been a captive at one time, and later met with a Mohahoe Indian woman who had been a prisoner of the Sioux in 1861. Although she did not explain herself, Ann Coleson stated "I really considered her a great acquisition, and felt much safer in her company."[49] It is possible that she did not

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[46]Ibid., 37.

[47]Ibid., 41.

[48]Ibid., 43.

[49]Ibid., 54.

feel comfortable alone in the company of the white man. The remainder of her captivity moves quickly to their return to white settlement and no information of her actions after her return are included.

URANIA WHITE

> As for myself, I could only remain silent, as if an inspiration had come to me from the great beyond . . . I gazed at this assembly of released captives . . . and thought what contentment and peace freedom brings to one who has been a captive among the wild savages of the Northwest.[50]

Urania White's narrative was written in 1896, over thirty years after she and her husband moved to Minnesota in June of 1862. They were attacked two months later. They had barely settled into their new home when the Sioux outbreak occurred. According to Urania White Little Crow and his people had nearly one thousand acres of land, promising a plentiful yield of corn. Yet she also noted the Sioux were having to dig roots to eat to ward off starvation, and indicated the lateness of the Sioux annuity payments due to the Civil War. But she stated, "knowing the treachery of the Indians none of us should have been surprised when this desperate attack overwhelmed us . . . ."[51] Urania White's captivity among the Sioux lasted thirty-nine days. Unlike so many other married women captives, Urania White's husband

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[50]Urania White, Captivity Among the Sioux (New York: Garland Publishers, 1976), 397.

[51]Ibid.

was away during the attack and was not killed. Along with approximately twenty-five of their neighbors, Urania White and her five children fled to what they hoped would be safety, but the Sioux came upon them and nine were killed, among them Urania White's sixteen year old son. Eleven were taken captive, and the remainder, including her twelve year old son, made their escape. Among those taken captive were Urania White, her teenage daughter, and five month old baby.

The captives were taken to Little Crow's village where approximately eight hundred warriors lived. Urania White also mentioned an emissary from the Confederate army having been present among the Sioux, instigating the outbreak and discussing the sale of Minnesota to the South.

Urania White was given to Too-kon-we-chasta, a Sioux warrior, and "although more than a third of a century has elapsed since that event, strange as it may appear to some, I cherish with kindest feelings the friendship of my Indian father and mother."[52] The first night the captives were shown how to make a "squaw dress" and made to put aside their own clothes and shoes. She mentioned that the last she saw of her shoes a young boy was playing with them as if a toy. Urania White's narrative describes the Sioux methods of cooking which she noted while not elaborate were labor-saving. Also described are the Sioux dwellings, dress, mode

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[52]Ibid., 404.

of travel, burial, and preparation for battle. The style of her narrative is overall much calmer than most, describing more ethnographic information and noting fewer atrocities, except those on a number of children during the initial attack.

A week after arriving at Little Crow's camp the whole village made a move westward; Urania White described the preparation in detail. Among the 800 warriors and their families preparing for the move were one hundred and seven white prisoners and approximately the same number of half-breeds, who considered themselves prisoners. During the journey Urania White noted the frustration and disgust the Sioux women had with her. They repeatedly tried to make her carry her baby in "squaw fashion" on her back but she continued to carry him in her arms. The Sioux women also attempted to show her

> how to sit on the ground; how to stand; and how to go in and out the tepee door, which was very low. I think they must have considered me a dull scholar, for I could not conform, or would not, to all their notions of gentility.[53]

After a number of moves westward the band reached Fort Release where the Sioux and the U. S. troops were expected to battle and

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[53]Ibid., 417.

> they gave us the cheering information that, if the white soldiers made an attack on them, we, the prisoners, would be placed in front of them, so that our rescuers bullets would strike us.[54]

During the battle Urania White and the other captives aided in digging trenches for the Sioux defense. The battle was fought September 23rd and the release of the captives came three days later.

The released captives remained ten days in the army camp to give testimony against the Sioux. Once Urania White was reunited with her husband and children, the White family headed towards St. Paul, and later to Wisconsin where they had previously lived. The family returned to Minnesota in 1865.

In conclusion Urania White discussed the military commission which recommended that "over three hundred murderous Indians" should be hanged, but in the final decision, President Lincoln reduced this number to thirty eight. In her final paragraph she described with some satisfaction the layout of the gallows. "The trap for the whole was sprung at the same instant, and thirty-eight bloody Indian villains were dangling at the ends of as many ropes."[55]

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[54]Ibid., 418.

[55]Ibid., 426.

JANNETTE DE CAMP SWEET

> No pen could describe the hideous features of those painted demons as they rode frantically backward and forward outside the wagons, yelling and shouting and brandishing their weapons, with their hands still reeking with the murders they had committed.[56]

Jannette De Camp Sweet wrote her narrative thirty years after the Sioux Uprising at the solicitation of a local newspaper in 1894. She stated her purpose in writing her story was not to portray the dreadful scene of August 18, 1862, but to tell of her four weeks among the Sioux.

Her initial dealings with the Sioux had been relatively friendly as was the instance of many women in the frontier settlements. "For more than a year we had lived among them on terms of friendly intimacy, if I may so describe it."[57] Indians daily visited Jannette De Camp Sweet's home to trade. Seeing the "great amount of suffering among the Indians, as the crops had been bad from drought and cut-worms," causing sickness and starvation, Jannette De Camp Sweet gave food to Indian women and children. She later noted it may have been her "friendly attitude toward those starving wretches," that "eventually became the means of our preservation from those horrid

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[56] Captivities of Mrs. J. E. De Camp Sweet, Nancy McClure, and Mary Schwandt (New York: Garland Publishers, 1976), 365.

[57] Ibid., 353.

tortures and a lingering death."[58] She also noted the Sioux payments had not arrived on time. To add to these problems she felt that the traders helped to instigate the Sioux anger as they told the Sioux that if their payment was ever made it would be their last.

Upon her capture she found herself among Sioux Indians she knew, and one came to her aid, saving her life. "He said that I was a good squaw, and called them cowards and squaws for wanting to kill women and children."[59] He said he would see that she and her children remained safe. Although she initially thought that the friendly Indians she had known had not taken part in the outbreak she soon found she was wrong. "The instinct of the savage had been fully aroused and blood and plunder was their only desire."[60] They said they were involved in the attacks because they enjoyed killing white men. Others felt their own lives would be in danger if they did not follow their people into battle against the whites. It was their intent to kill all the whites in Minnesota before they were through.

Jannette De Camp Sweet's earlier kindness to the Sioux did indeed seem to have benefitted her during her captivity.

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[58]Ibid., 356.

[59]Ibid., 359.

[60]Ibid., 360.

She was helped first by Wacouta, who saved her life, and later by an old Sioux woman who gave her food and clothing.

> He was telling her who we were and how good we had been to them, saying that then I had everything and now I was poor captive, without food or clothes . . . . The poor old man had tried to comfort us the best he could, and I did not soon forget his attempted kindness in my forlorn state.[61]

Soon her thoughts turned to escape. She made plans along with another to make an escape attempt. Although not specifically stated, she escaped with a half-blood woman, and together they made their way to the home of the Indian woman's relatives who were Christian Indians living within the village. Later with their help she was able to get away from Little Crow's village to the troops sent to rescue the captives.

> We did not realize, . . . the danger to which we would be exposed from our troops had we gone in unannounced, for we all looked more or less like aboriginals.[62]

After her return she moved to the South until after the Civil War and returned to Minnesota in 1866. Jannette De Camp Sweet's narrative ends with the description of her husband's participation during the uprising as well as the Sioux who helped her escape. "Whether he is how living I do not know, but for his faithful kindness to me and mine I

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[61]Ibid., 369.

[62]Ibid., 377.

shall never cease to remember him as a true friend, albeit an Indian."[63]

NANCY McCLURE

> Commonly the roar of cannon is a dreadful sound in the ears of women, but to us captives in the Indian camp the sound of General Sibley's guns was a sweet as the chimes of wedding bells to the bride.[64]

Nancy McClure's narrative comes from a somewhat different perspective than those previously described, since she was half Sioux, her mother was an Indian, her father white. She lived most of her life among the whites and other half-bloods in boarding schools were she worked to earn her education. While half Sioux, she yet reacted to natives in much the same way a white girl would, noting that while at one school she had her first "Indian scare," when a drunken Indian came into the schoolyard. After her mother's death she lived with her Sioux grandmother, and at age sixteen she married a French trader, also of mixed blood. When she heard of the attack on August 18th her first reaction was to run back to her house, "woman-like," to save some of her jewelry.[65] She and her husband along with other mixed-blood people hid in the woods where the Sioux quickly found them, disarmed them and took them to their camp. When

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[63]Ibid., 380.

[64]Ibid., 454.

[65]Ibid., 449.

Nancy McClure's husband asked what the Sioux were doing, the Indians replied that

> all the Indians are on the warpath; we are going to kill all the white people in Minnesota; we are not going to hurt you, for you have trusted us with goods . . . .[66]

But because many of the half-bloods had been against the uprising the Sioux were insulted, "for they said we were worse than the whites, and that they were going to kill all of us."[67] The Sioux were also angered that there were many half-bloods with General Sibley. The warriors complained that every time a half-blood fired his gun a Sioux warrior was killed. It pleased Nancy McClure to know the her race had demonstrated their loyalty to the whites and had come to their aid.

When General Sibley surrounded the camp he released the white captives first but told Nancy McClure that she and her child could leave with the white prisoners as she was a friend, but she choose to remain captive until the half-bloods were released as well. She later served as a witness before the military commission but stated that those taking part in the murder of whites were not present among those who had surrendered.

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[66]Ibid., 550.

[67]Ibid., 452.

MARY SCHWANDT

> A few days since I saw Little Crow's scalp among the relics of the Historical Society, and may I be forgiven for the sin of feeling a satisfaction at the sight.[68]

Mary Schwandt's narrative is the third of the three narratives solicited by the Pioneer Press in 1894. The other two were those of Jannette De Camp Sweet and Nancy McClure. Part of her captivity Mary Schwandt was held captive with Jannette De Camp Sweet. She stated that since Mrs. Sweet had so thoroughly described the incidents of August 18, 1862, she would not repeat what the reader had already heard of that "dreadful night." In fact she was pleased to be able to avoid the incidents.

> Since it pleased God that we should all suffer as we did at this time, I pray him of his mercy to grant that all my memories of this period of my captivity may soon and forever pass away.[69]

Mary Schwandt was fourteen years old when her family moved to Minnesota, in the spring of 1862. She noted that the Sioux visited nearly every day but she found their ways "so strange they were disagreeable to me. They were always begging, but otherwise were well behaved."[70] When the events of August 18th began Mary Schwandt and her family traveled towards New Ulm but they were soon overtaken by

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[68]Ibid., 470.

[69]Ibid., 468.

[70]Ibid., 462.

fifty Sioux Indians. They were taken to Wacouta's home where she found Jannette De Camp Sweet as well.

Little Crow apparently enjoyed putting on a show to scare the young girl as he came up to her shaking his tomahawk as if to kill her. "He brandished his tomahawk over me a few times, then laughed, put it back in his belt and walked away, still laughing . . . ."[71]

During her captivity, Mary Schwandt was bought by an old Sioux woman and given to her daughter. These two women hid Mary Schwandt "many a time, when the savage and brutal Indians were threatening to kill all the prisoners . . . ."[72] As was the case with many of the captives she helped with the daily work, cooking, gathering and chopping wood, and other duties performed by the women.

Mary Schwandt described a number of her experiences while a captive. One that was particularly difficult was seeing a five year old girl cut and gashed with a knife. A more puzzling scene to Mary Schwandt was seeing two white women she knew "painted and decorated and dressed in full Indian costume, and [they] seemed proud of it . . . ." They "appeared to enjoy their new life." Mary Schwandt and other captives found these women's conduct abhorrent "and would

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[71]Ibid., 470.

[72]Ibid., 471.

have but little to do with them."[73] They found one woman's actions particularly strange since she had witnessed her husband's death, as well as that of her baby, at the hand of the very Indian she was living with.

Mary Schwandt was given up with the majority of captives at Camp Release to General Sibley. Her family had all been killed except for one brother. She testified before the military commission but would not bring herself to describe any particulars within her narrative.

WILHEMINA BUCE CARRIGAN

> Henrietta and I would sit and watch them and wonder how many Indians there were in the world. I told her it was full of them as they had killed all the white people, and so it did seem to me just then.[74]

Wilhemina Buce Carrigan's story was published as a serial in Minnesota's Buffalo Lake News in 1903 and later published in book form at the urging of her friends. She wished to retell her story so people would

> appreciate the pioneers of Minnesota, and [have] a like appreciation for the manifold comforts and advantages which are ours to enjoy at present, but which were not thought of by our ancesters [sic] forty years ago, . . .[75]

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[73]Ibid., 475.

[74]Wilhemina Buce Carrigan, Captured by the Indians (New York: Garland Publishers, 1977), 25-26.

[75]Ibid., Preface.

Although she was only seven years old at the time of her captivity she stated it held experiences not easily forgotten.

Wilhemina Buce Carrigan's family; father, mother, a brother and sister, left Germany in 1858 to settle in Wisconsin, and the following year in Minnesota where two more girls were born into the family. Their life on the frontier was "peaceful and uneventful" until the spring of 1862 when "so many people came into the country that we did not know half of our neighbors."[76] It was also at this time that their native neighbors changed towards the white settlers. "They became disagreeable and ill-natured. They seldom visited us and when they met us, passed by coldly and sullenly and often without speaking."[77] It was during the initial outbreak that Wilhemina Buce Carrigan's mother, father and one baby sister were killed. While captive she saw an old Sioux woman, and her daughter she recognized as one of the friendly Indians who used to visit her family. "I jumped off the couch and ran to the young girl and put my arms around her and hugged her tightly . . . . she seemed to know I wanted protection."[78] Wilhemina Buce Carrigan spent the next ten weeks among a group of about ten families.

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[76]Ibid., 9.

[77]Ibid., 10.

[78]Ibid.

Because of her age she was somewhat protected from performing a great many household duties, but she did find a number of Indian boys taunted and teased her. Throughout her captivity she was taken care of by Sioux who had been friends of her family.

A number of experiences are described in her narrative, the move north, the feast before a battle, and others which compare with those mentioned in other narratives. One may assume she might have added to her knowledge of the occurrences over the years or she may have been so deeply affected by these incidents that she never forgot them as she states in the beginning of her narrative. It is likely that it is some of both. After the battle between the Sioux and General Sibley's troops on September 23, 1862, the captives learned they were free and were told to wait in the tents until the troops came for them. The most impressive experience she remembered of the following three weeks with the soldiers was the lack of food. Wilhemina Buce Carrigan, her brother and one sister were placed under a guardianship. Later her brother left for Montana to hunt and kill Indians and was assumed killed in Custer's last battle.

Included in Wilhemina Buce Carrigan's narrative is a short description of "The Negro Godfrey" who is mentioned in a number of other narratives as well. She found this man even more detestable than the Sioux. She noted he not only

bragged about the number of women and children he killed in one day but was said to have killed a husband and wife and then roasted their child over the fire. Wilhemina Buce Carrigan found it particularly abhorrent that after the uprising he married his second Indian wife, "thereby becoming a ward of the governement [sic], or is sponging off his wife's allowance."[79] After the uprising he turned states evidence to avoid hanging, and sent many to the gallows, only adding to his contemptible attributes.

SARAH LARIMER

> Many persons have since assured me that death would have been preferable to life with such prospects, saying that rather than submitted to be carried away by the savages to a doubtful doom, they would have taken their own lives.[80]

Both Sarah Larimer and Fanny Kelly were members of an emigrant train on their way to the gold country of Idaho, when it was attacked by the Sioux in 1864. Sarah Larimer, taken captive, wrote her narrative in 1870. While she described her experiences with the Sioux she also described native life and customs at length. Her reflections of the West are not only lengthy but somewhat flowery in style. She described many people, places and occurrences not directly involved with her captivity. Sarah Larimer also described in detail the landscape and flora and fauna of the

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[79]Ibid., n. p.

[80]Sarah Luse Larimer, Capture and Escape: or, Life Among the Sioux (New York: Garland Publishers, 1976), 47.

country they travelled through on their way West as well as while she was on her journey as a captive.

The emigrant train of eleven persons had been told that everything along the trail West was safe and that they need not fear the Indians, but not far beyond Fort Laramie they were first visited by approximately 250 Sioux, and later attacked by the same. Their wagons were the first to be attacked by what was thought to be Sioux who had escaped capture from the Minnesota Uprising in 1862. News of this attack spread quickly and many trains traveled cautiously West, and yet many met similar fates as Sarah Larimer.

Sarah Larimer had heard much about the Indians of the West, of their pride, and lofty and noble character but once she came into contact with the Sioux she had a very different view of what she had been told. "Much has been said of the noble traits of the Indian character, but, notwithstanding, observation has confirmed our opinion that there has been a mistake somewhere.[81] Her young son, seven years old, "had an ungovernable dread of the Indians—a repugnance that could not be overcome . . . ."[82] Even after he met friendly Indians, and his mother's attempt to persuade him otherwise, he felt much the same.

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[81]Ibid., 128.

[82]Ibid., 41-42.

Although the reason for it was not explained in her narrative, during the attack the men of the emigrant train quickly disappeared; some were killed, some escaped capture, and the women and children were then taken captive.

> Now the broad bosom of the river lay stretched out before us like a barrier to further progress, and, if once passed, was a line drawn between us and the civilized world.[83]

Sarah Larimer described her journey with the Sioux in detail, commenting that the beauty of the scenery around her seemed paradoxical to her somewhat tenuous situation among the more than two hundred "savage Indian warriors." Fearing her son might be killed she gave him to one of the warriors and noted that he was apparently adopted into the tribe. She also noted that this gift, or possibly what the Sioux saw as her reconciliation to her situation, caused her captors to treat her differently. Suddenly, Sarah Larimer stated, that "arrangements for our comfort were made that had not been done before . . . ."[84]

During her captivity Sarah Larimer noted the Sioux's lack of a notion of "properly prepared food," as well as their peculiar ideas of tasteful dress. All of the emigrants' possessions taken, the warriors had each taken an article of clothing for themselves and Sarah could not help but comment on their ridiculous appearance. Also among the

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[83]Ibid., 60.

[84]Ibid., 68.

confiscated goods she noticed her son's readers and decided to teach her captors how to read, noting, with delight, "the aptitude and interest they manifested . . . ."[85] In exchange for her reading lessons she was offered, and accepted archery lessons. She explained not only these lessons but the making of arrow points and the bows and arrows themselves.

As her isolated situation became less and less bearable, with the thoughts of a captive future for her son and herself, she decided to escape. Their escape was discovered the next morning but the two managed to stay ahead of the Sioux searching for her, and four days later the two arrived among an emigrant train heading West.

After her return, Sarah Larimer stated many people seemed to think she understood the Sioux and could answer the questions the emigrants had. Although she viewed this as somewhat ridiculous she devoted approximately half of her narrative to descriptions of the customs, superstitions, and lifestyle of the Sioux. She even included information on the Inca of Peru and a speech written by an Iroquois sachem. Much of her American Indian information came from George Catlin, an American artist and ethnologist of the 1800s.

Sarah Larimer's narrative also includes stories of other female captives she had heard about. Some were women

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[85]Ibid., 76.

preferring to stay with the Indians, others were young children who were brought up as Indians, and remained, and others were returned to white settlement. Included are the stories of four women who had been taken captive in Minnesota in 1862 during the uprising and taken to the area northwest of Fort Laramie. Two were ransomed, one, when finally rescued immediately applied for a divorce from her husband, citing his "cruelty in leaving her and their child in jeopardy when the Indians came upon them." For another woman, ransoming came too late as upon her return she was taken to an insane asylum where her husband soon followed.[86]

With her inclusion of Indian customs, other female captives, characters of the West, and the lengthy and flowery descriptions of her surroundings on the emigrant and captive trail, Sarah Larimer's narrative stands out as somewhat different from those previously mentioned, but similar to that of Fanny Kelly, a fellow traveler and captive.

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[86]Ibid., 156.

> Drunkenness, profanity, and dissolute habits are the lessons of civilization to the red men, and when the weapons we furnish are turned against ourselves, their edge is keen indeed.[87]

While Fanny Kelly and Sarah Larimer were taken captive together by the Sioux their experiences and sentiments toward their captors differ. Unlike Sarah Larimer, Fanny Kelly remained captive until released nearly six months after taken captive. Their narratives are similar in style, and there are even passages which are identical in the two narratives. One in particular is Kelly's statement that her child had a great fear of Indians, "a repugnance that could not be overcome . . . ."[88] The passage continues on in the same words as those written by Sarah Larimer. Fanny Kelly's narrative was written in 1871 so it might be assumed she had read Sarah Larimer's narrative and possibly borrowed from it. Fanny Kelly mentions that her original manuscript was stolen before it could be published and having no other copy spent a great deal of time and effort to recall what she had previously written. Fanny Kelly also described the geography and the flora and fauna in lengthy detail.

Fanny Kelly also knew of Indians before she went West, and her view was one of the noble savage.

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[87]Fanny Kelly, My Captivity Among the Sioux Indians (New York: Corinth Books, Inc., 1871; reprint, 1962), 60 (page references are to reprint edition).

[88]Ibid., 21.

> The stately Logan, the fearless Philip, the bold Black Hawk, the gentle Pocahontas; how unlike the greedy, cunning and cruel savages who had so ruthlessly torn me from my friends![89]

The images of the Indian as noble, bold, and proud she decided were meant only to fill the pages of books to interest readers, and had little to do with the harsh truth.

Despite the hardships and agony of losing her young daughter during the early stage of their captivity, Fanny Kelly stated "I readily adapted myself to my new position."[90] She was given a young girl to replace her daughter, whose companionship she learned to enjoy, and she noted that overall her captors treated her well, showing her compassion. During her captivity she was invited to feast with the chiefs. This was an honor, she was told by the Sioux women, and she was even given exalted seating at this and other times. Fanny Kelly also joined in the scalp dance and took part in other Sioux ceremonies which she described in detail.

A number of times it appears Fanny Kelly identified with her captors, shifting voices from "they" to "we." When General Sully and his troops were near her and the Sioux, she noted they stopped, "thus giving us [emphasis mine] an opportunity to escape, which saved us from falling into

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[89]Ibid., 77.

[90]Ibid., 87.

their hands, as otherwise we inevitably would have done."[91] Like Sarah Larimer, Fanny Kelly also taught the Sioux to read and write.

Fanny Kelly was able somehow to correspond with an army officer and learned there was a reward for her capture from the Sioux. Soon after this correspondence began she was sent to live with the chief's relatives who, seeing her unhappiness, treated her kindly. Among this new family she found herself more contented than she had been since the beginning of her captivity, spending her time assisting the older women with their daily work.

Her release was finally made through another tribe, the Blackfeet, who the army accused of holding Fanny Kelly captive. Until they agreed to aid in her release, the army refused to sell or trade with the Blackfeet. Upon being taken by the Blackfeet, she found her condition worsened and regretted having to leave the Sioux. "Savages they were, and I longed to be free from them; but now I parted them with regret and misgiving."[92]

Fanny Kelly's narrative described her feelings of uneasiness after her return to white settlement. She mentioned that for some time afterwards she felt the effects of her captivity.

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[91]Ibid., 103.

[92]Ibid., 172-73.

> I was ill at ease among my new friends, and they told me that my eyes wore a strangely wild expression, like those of a person constantly in fear of some unknown dread.[93]

After her release, while in Washington, Congress awarded Fanny Kelly $5000 for aid she gave in saving an army train and Fort Sully from destruction through her correspondence.

MARY BARBER

> If my narrative has proved interesting I am well satisfied, but if in its perusal some silly girl may change her mind regarding the noble red men and relinquish all thoughts of going among them, for any purpose whatever, then I am fully satisfied.[94]

Mary Barber's captivity in 1867 began under circumstances considerably different from those of the previous captivities described. In 1867, at nineteen years of age, Mary Barber married the Brule Sioux chief, Squatting Bear, in Washington, D. C. She did so in hopes of returning to his tribe to bring them Christianity. On their journey to her new home the two were met with mixed reactions. They "were greeted either with cheers, or shouts of derision, from the crowds assembled at the different railroad depots."[95] Her marriage attracted not only American but European interest as well. She noted many people said, after her return from five years with the Sioux, that

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[93]Ibid., 212.

[94]Mary Barber, The True Narrative of Five Years' Suffering and Perilous Adventures (New York: Garland Publishers, 1978), 101.

[95]Ibid., 21.

"sentimentalism rather than religious fervor caused the step, which I have since repented, that of marrying an Indian chief."[96]

Her missionizing efforts did not appear to have gone far. Upon her first attempt to convert her husband she was met with anger and difficulty as he told her not to talk to the men of her religion but only to the women. Those efforts she did not describe. Her narrative does not discuss the subject again until later when a missionary visited the village inspiring her to continue her missionary efforts. She stated that she did not love her husband and was quite surprised, and she noted, hurt, that he already had two other wives and soon obtained a third Indian wife. Mary Barber was treated in the same manner as her husband's other wives and overall as other Sioux women. She noted, "I have seen and cruelly felt the usage accorded the squaw."[97] Included in her narrative are descriptions of Sioux lifestyle, religion, morals, and superstitions.

During her stay with the Sioux she saw the capture, torture and death of a white U. S. infantryman. After witnessing these acts she became determined to escape. Mary Barber was also made to endure tortures from her husband who, during one instance whipped her and painted her face

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[96]Ibid., 19.

[97]Ibid., 25.

with the blood from her wounds. Her husband also made her endure what she call an "Amazonian contest," a fight to the death between herself and another of Squatting Bear's wives. The two women were dressed in braves' clothing and made to fight. Although Mary Barber did not kill her opponent she won the contest.

While in Minnesota she was sold to a Brule chief who offered three ponies to her husband. At her urging a white hunter helped her escape from her new owner and thus she escaped both her marriage and her captivity with the Sioux.

Mary Barber, while describing her experiences among the Sioux, was also attempting to justify her actions to her readers and critics. Articles were written after Mary Barber's return in 1872 which condemned her "asserting that it was 'nothing but the romance and folly in the head of a silly girl which induced her to wed an Indian, pretending, or imagining that it was the cause of religion.'"[98] It must be admitted that Mary Barber's narrative does little to disprove the criticisms levied on her. She mentions no success of conversion save one young girl, with whom she made an unsuccessful escape attempt.

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[98]Ibid., 22.

CHAPTER III

COMANCHE CAPTIVITIES:

1833-1854

The Comanche were a tribe of nomadic horsemen living on the High Plains and prairie country of what is now Texas and parts of Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado and Kansas. They were a plains tribe, made up of a number of bands each with as many as several hundred people. They were part of the plains horse complex, which relied upon the buffalo and other game of the Plains for their living. During the 1700s and 1800s the Comanche became known for their military prowess and ferocity and impeded the expansion of the Spanish as well as the Anglo-American into their region. Population figures for the Comanche during the 1830s to 1850s are set at between 15,000 and 20,000, with 4,500 and possibly as many as 8,000 warriors.

Until 1820 there had been little contact between the Comanche and the Anglo-American. At this time American traders began making expeditions and settlers began moving into the Texas region. In the 1830s eastern tribes displaced by their forced removal, as directed by President Andrew Jackson, began encroaching upon Comanche territory, altering their hunting grounds and impinging upon their way

of life. In 1835 the Comanche treatied with the United States commissioners to share their hunting grounds with the eastern tribes, and to allow U. S. citizens to pass through their territory without molestation. The treaty proved of little value and soon both parties were disregarding its stipulations. Gradually many American settlers came to Texas, building their settlements where they wished with little concern for the Comanche's claim or presence in the territory. Eighteen thirty five also saw the beginning of hostile Comanche raids against the American settlements as well as the continuation of their raids on Mexican settlements to the south and west. In 1836 the United States claimed the Texas Republic as their own thus compounding the Comanche's problems. Congress soon enacted new laws to protect the frontier and conflict between the Comanche and the Americans only increased throughout this period. In 1867, the Comanche, now numbering approximately 5,000, were placed on a reservation.

The Comanche took captives throughout their period of raiding on the Plains. Mexicans made up the greater number of captives but Americans were taken as well. The captives were treated as slaves until they were adopted by their owners or married into the tribe. Generally during raids the men were killed, women were taken captive and young children were adopted into the tribe. Female captives often became wives of their warrior captors and were made to join

in the chores of the Comanche women involving household duties, which could mean butchering buffalo, tearing down the tipis for a move, or tending to needs of children and the warriors.

The following narratives come from this period of the 1830s till the 1850s. These female captives were following their husbands to what they hoped would be a better life in the new Texas region. Many of them stayed even after their lives had been totally altered forever by the incidents they describe within their narratives. While narratives by definition are written by the returned captive there is one narrative of a woman who was a young girl at the time of her capture. She stayed with her captors until she was recaptured by American troops over twenty years after her original capture. The majority of the Comanche narratives speak of the cruelty of their captors, but some also describe both the customs of the Comanche and their movements during this period of time.

JANE WILSON

> The past seems like a horrid dream. I have related nothing but facts, and no language that I can use can fully express the sufferings of mind and body which I have endured.[1]

Jane Wilson's narrative was published in 1854 in the Hartford Courant, two years after her captivity among the

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[1]Jane Adeline Wilson, Narrative of Sufferings Among the Camanche (New York: Garland Publishers, 1978), 21.

Comanche in Texas. Her narrative is brief and does not give many of the details seen in other narratives. There is, for instance, no indication as to where Wilson's original home was. It is surmised her captivity with the Comanche was approximately one month, and she spent just over a month with the Mexican party who helped her to her final destination after she escaped the Comanches. At age sixteen, Jane Wilson and her husband heard of people becoming "rich very fast in California" and they "concluded to move and commence life in that distant country."[2] Soon in their journey, the party of twenty-two wagons heading to California was attacked by Mexicans. Nearly all of their property was stolen and so they had to turn back towards Texas. As they made their return trip they were again attacked, this time by the Comanche. Jane Wilson's husband and all but three of the emigrating party were killed. Jane Wilson and her husband's two young brothers were taken captive.

> The boys were mounted on good animals, and had bows and arrows.— Their faces were painted Indian fashion, and they looked like young savages. They appeared to enjoy this new mode of life, and were never treated with excessive cruelty.[3]

Jane Wilson's treatment, both physically and emotionally, was unfortunately for her, not as kind. Her hair was cut

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[2]Ibid., 20.

[3]Ibid.

off "Comanche-style," and used to decorate the heads of the warriors. Jane Wilson stated "nothing of interest occurred except repeated acts of inhumanity towards me." She was given little or no food unless there was an abundance. After two Comanche men and a woman arrived at the encampment her situation became even worse. "Up to this time, my suffering had been so severe as to take from me all desire to live, but now they were greatly increased."[4] Although she expected to be treated kindly by the Comanche squaw she found herself mistaken. Jane Wilson was whipped and beaten, and made to ride a mule which threw her off often, and all this with only two weeks till the due date of her first child. "They understood my situation, but instead of softening their hearts it only made them more inhuman, and subjected me to greater sufferings."[5]

Because of her harsh treatment Jane Wilson admitted she was tempted to kill her "inhuman master . . . . I thought if I could only cut him to pieces I could die content." She had been ready, she said, at any opportunity to make her escape. "I never expected to reach any friendly settlement, but I did not wish to give the Indians the pleasure of seeing me die."[6]

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[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., 21.

[6]Ibid.

During their daily travels Jane Wilson was always sent ahead of everyone because she walked so slowly. One day she finally took this advantage and hid, and escaped her captors, but without food or the hope of shelter. "My cup was filled to overflowing, but I resolved to live in hope, if I died in despair."[7] To Jane Wilson's good fortune she was given aid by a group of Mexicans who came upon her. One in particular helped her by giving her blankets and food and hid her when the Comanches came to the Mexican encampment. She remained with the Mexicans over a month and was eventually escorted to Pecos, Texas where she was taken in by an army officer and his wife.

SARAH ANN HORN

> I felt, indeed, as though I was hastening onward, if not to death itself, to some indefinite scene of misery, the anticipation of which is only second to the reality.[8]

Sarah Ann Horn and her husband emigrated from England to New York in 1833 along with their two children, aged sixteen and thirty-one months. They soon heard of a colony formed along the Rio Grande in Texas. Once they arrived at the colony they found the stories of the land yielding two good crops a year were exaggeration and they learned they would be fortunate to harvest one fair crop a year. To add

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[7]Ibid.

[8]Sarah Ann Horn, A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Horn, and her Two Children with Mrs. Harris, by the Camanche Indians (New York: Garland Publishers, 1977), 10.

to the Horn's disillusionment and worry they heard that Comanche had attacked a family approximately forty miles from the colony. This compelled Sarah Ann Horn and her husband to decide to take their children and return to England. As they began their journey east not only did they have to fear attacks by the Comanche but by the Mexicans as well, who were "carrying on a war of extermination against the Americans . . . . But hitherto the good Being had protected me, and I tried to commend myself and family still to his fatherly protection."[9] In trying to avoid Mexican troops the fifteen travelers came upon and were attacked by forty or fifty Comanche. Sarah Ann Horn and her children were quickly separated from her husband as the warriors attacked and killed him. Only the women and children were spared death. When they arrived at the Comanche village they were met by several hundred people. At night the captives were tied by their hands and feet and they received no food for a number of days. Sarah Ann Horn graphically describes her concern for her children, "the moanings of my dear children for bread and water, would have induced me, had it been possible to have torn my flesh from my bones to appease their hunger, . . ."[10]

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[9]Ibid., 15-16.

[10]Ibid., 19.

During their captivity both Sarah Ann Horn and another captive, Mrs. Harris, were ordered to make clothing for the Comanche from their own clothes that the Comanche had taken from their wagons. Also while captive, Sarah Ann Horn was witness to many physical atrocities. The Comanche came upon a number of American troops and killed them and later took a Mexican man captive. They demanded that this captive take the Comanche to his home. Once there they killed the man and his family and others who lived nearby.

> . . . the savages amused themselves by shooting their arrows into the dead bodies of the men they had just slain; and compelled us to look on while they did so, filling the surrounding forest with their horrid yells of feindish triumph, and cursing the Americans.[11]

Sarah Ann Horn was also beaten by her captors,

> he held his whip in one hand, and drew his knife with the other . . . . With his whip he gave me many cruel stripes; but so much keener was the anguish of my soul, than any that even a savage could inflict upon my almost naked body, that his strokes seemed to me of no more weight than a feather. . . . And it is to Him I owe it that I was sustained in the fiery trial.[12]

While captive Sarah Ann Horn was given to a Comanche woman whom she helped perform household duties. She lived with the woman's family and noted a special indebtedness to her mistress's mother. "I spent a considerable part of my time with the old woman. She was a merciful exception to

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[11]Ibid., 28.

[12]Ibid., 32-33.

the general character of these merciless beings, . . ."[13] Sarah Ann Horn did not see her children for over two months and when she was reunited with them she noted that her youngest son looked like an Indian.

After spending a year and a half with the Comanche Sarah Ann Horn was ransomed by "American gentlemen traders, who had authorized this Spaniard [Mexican] to purchase us at any amount."[14] She spent the following three or four months among the Mexicans who arranged her release and finally she was taken to a nearby American store owner. Of her captivity she then stated, "it had been one of the severest items in my bodily sufferings, that I could get no coffee, nor anything of the kind, that was warm, to take in the morning, during my captivity."[15] She soon became determined to go back to the United States and did so with the help of two American traders. Although a party was sent to ransom Sarah Ann Horn's two children the Comanche would not release them. Of her travels back to the United States she noted that

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[13]Ibid., 36.

[14]Ibid., 45.

[15]Ibid., 47.

> most of this tedious way is infested with hordes of merciless savages, who, as opportunity presents, sacrifice the life of the defenceless or unwary traveller; and many have fallen victims to their wretched cupidity.[16]

Included in Sarah Ann Horn's narrative was a brief description of the manners and customs of the Comanche. She described their mode of dress, healing practices, births and burials, treatment of women, menstruation rituals, and food and its preparation.

DOLLY WEBSTER

> I had resolved to make no further efforts and quietly submit to my fate, and lay my body at rest in the savage wilds of a strange country, the only remaining hope left to obtain relief from my present afflictions.[17]

Dolly Webster's narrative appeared in 1843 describing her six month captivity among the Comanche and Caddo Indians in Texas. Dolly Webster, her husband and a number of friends left Virginia for Texas in 1837, searching for the milder climate and a more productive soil they had been told about. All of the members of their party were killed during a Comanche attack except Dolly Webster and her two children. Dolly Webster was wounded during the attack and fell unconscious. When she recovered she found herself "in a distant country," she "and her two children prisoners to the

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[16]Ibid., 19.

[17]Benjamin Dolbeare, A Narrative of the Captivity and Suffering of Dolly Webster Among the Camanche Indians of Texas (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1986), 8.

Comanche Indians, a fierce and blood-thirsty race, to be taken into the wilderness, far beyond the ken of civilization."[18]

Once the captives arrived at the Comanche encampment the Indians stripped her. She resisted and was aided by her Comanche captor who "prevented them from giving me further insult, but used no effort to protect me from their cowardly blows."[19] Also held by the Comanche was a twelve year old American boy, captive for one and a half years, and a sixteen year old Mexican girl, captive for three years. During Dolly Webster's first days as a captive she and her two children "had to undergo the ceremony of being made a Camanche [sic], which was to join them for a few moments it [sic] the dance, and in case of a refusal, we were beaten severely."[20] Dolly Webster stated, the Comanche were "destitute of every principle of justice and moral honesty, . . . They are treacherous, cowardly treacherous."[21]

After spending approximately one month among the Comanche Dolly Webster and her two children escaped. She felt she could no longer endure being beaten and seeing her

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[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid., 11.

[21]Ibid., 12.

children beaten. They had been running from the Comanche for nearly one month when they were met by "a company of Cado [sic] Indians, negroes, and a few Mexicans. They approached us in a friendly manner, shook hands with us, and took us prisners [sic]!"[22]

> They commenced their examination, asked many questions in relation to the strengrh [sic] of the Mexicans and their warlike forces, to all of which I gave correct answers. The sentence was, if caught me in a lie, to kill me instantly with a tomahawk.[23]

Dolly Webster and her children travelled among this group for another five months. Her narrative described details in a diary-like manner as she attempted to give information of day to day occurrences. The encampment was at one time visited by a party of Tywackness Indians who desired to purchase the captives to eat because "they said the whites wer [sic] the best eating in the world."[24] The old chief, her Caddo captor seemed to have a great attachment to Dolly Webster and her children and refused to sell them. Included in her narrative are comments on daily life and the comings and goings of the American troops, Mexicans, and other tribes. While she was captive with the Caddo thirty Mexican captives were taken, twelve of them women. Dolly Webster mentions little of them except to note

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[22]Ibid., 16.

[23]Ibid., 18.

[24]Ibid.

they had large quantities of jewelry and other goods. "Some of the ladies lamented their hard fortune very much. The savages treated them worse than brutes; . . ."[25] The encampment was visited twice by American traders who attempted to purchase Dolly Webster and her children but without success.

Dolly Webster again decided to escape her captors after they had gone without food for four days and been cruelly beaten. Her oldest son decided to remain with the Caddo.

> [He] said when he became larger he would leave there, and wished me not to be uneasy about him, for he never intended to learn their language, he wished me all success, but the journey was too—great for him.[26]

She took her daughter that same night and made her escape from the Caddo encampment. Dolly Webster and her daughter travelled without water, food or shelter, and always aware that they could be caught by the Comanche or Caddo again. She said

> I pondered, resolved and re-resolved, and then despaired of ever reaching the white settlement; I was also, aware, that if ever Indians came across me, instant death would be the consequence."[27]

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[25]Ibid., 20.

[26]Ibid., 25-26.

[27]Ibid., 31.

Along their way Dolly Webster took in the sights of her surroundings, in particular noting a rock formation several hundred feet high,

> its general appearance is so formidable and inaccessible, I presume no human being ever had the pleasure of visiting the top of it. Its appearance enchantingly sublime and picturesque. And how insignificant do we appear—how diminutive, when compared to the stupendous works of nature; . . .[28]

Dolly Webster and her daughter reached the white settlement of San Antonio. They were greeted by nearly "fifty people men and women, contending which should take me home with them. All seemed anxious to be first in the discharge of their friendly and christian duties."[29] The two were given a room, clothing and food at a local hotel. Dolly Webster gave a short accounting of her captures and escapes to a crowded room of people. The following day the townspeople gave Dolly Webster one hundred and ninety dollars in silver, nearly four hundred dollars in paper, and enough clothing to last both she and her daughter a year. Her son was brought into San Antonio a week later as part of the stipulations made in a treaty between the Caddo and the Americans. The three remained in San Antonio for approximately two months and then went to live in Austin, Texas.

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[28]Ibid., 30-31.

[29]Ibid., 33.

RACHEL PLUMMER

> I am confident it can be of no possible benefit to any person to read a full statement of their barbarous treatment, and I assure my sanguine reader that it is with feelings of deep regret that I think of it, much less speak or write of tt [sic].[30]

Rachel Plummer was a member of the settlers at Parker's Fort in Texas. She and her son spent over a year as captives among the Comanche. Her fifteen page narrative went through two editions, the original in 1838 and a second, revised and edited, in 1844, five years after her death. Her narrative also became the basis for two fictional accounts.

On the morning of May 19th of 1836 the families at Parker's Fort were attacked by Comanche Indians. Rachel Plummer's two uncles along with two other settler's attempted to fend off the attack, and were killed. She stated "though I was vain enough to try to run to save myself they soon headed me, and one large sulky looking Indian picked up a hoe and knocked me down." A Comanche warrior then took her son from her arms and hit her again until she fainted. "The first thing I recollect was the Indians dragging me along by the hair of the head."[31] When she regained consciousness her son was gone, she thought

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[30]Rachel Plummer, Rachel Plummer's Narrative: of Twenty-one Months Servitude as a Prisoner among the Commanche Indians (Austin: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1977), 7.

[31]Ibid, 6.

most likely dead, and she found herself captive along with her aunt, Elizabeth Kellogg, and John and Cynthia Parker. She assumed that her father, husband, and the others at the fort had been killed.

The captives journeyed towards the Comanche camp with some six or seven hundred Comanche and an unknown number of warriors from other tribes. Each night Rachel Plummer and the other captives were bound by their hands and feet so they could not escape. She noted the brutality of her captors, as she stated

> they soon convinced me that I had no time to reflect on what was past, for they commenced whipping me in such a manner that the wounds and bruises were not well for some weeks, in fact my flesh was never clear of wounds . . . . and to undertake to narrate the sufferings I endured for the next ensuing twenty-one months, would be utterly impossible.[32]

Often it was the strain of separation from her son that was worse than her own physical pain. "I could hear my little James Pratt crying for mother, and I could easily hear the blows they gave him and sometimes his feeble voice was weakened by the blows."[33]

Early in the journey Rachel Plummer went for five days without food, yet within the same period of time she stated she "could not but admire the country. It is beautiful faced country—prairie and timber." She also listed the

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[32]Ibid., 7

[33]Ibid.

many different kinds of trees and made note of the general lay of the land.

> in a few words, Texas is calculated to suit the feelings or taste of all people, for they can find a section of country as cold as they desire . . . or as warm as they may wish.[34]

After a time the captives were split up among the different tribes. Rachel Plummer and her son remained with the same tribe. Although given to different families she was reunited with him for a time but it was to be the final time she would see him. At the time of her captivity Rachel PLummer was pregnant and after five months of her captivity she gave birth to a son. She stated after this the Comanche were not as hostile as they had been earlier, but when her baby was about six weeks old she stated

> one of them caught it by the throat and choked it till it was black in the face, and while he was doing so the rest of the Indians were holding me, to prevent my from trying to releive [sic] the child. When entirely dead, yea, literally torn to pieces! one of them took it up by one leg and brought it to me, and threw it in my lap.[35]

And even after all this she is able to say "but in praise to the savages, I must say they gave me time to dig a small hole in the earth and deposit away."[36]

During her captivity Rachel Plummer mentions a large council of Comanche and many other tribes. She listened in

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[34]Ibid., 9.

[35]Ibid., 10.

[36]Ibid.

on the proceedings, and as she now understood the language she hoped she might hear something to aid in her release. She stated she was whipped a number of times for listening but she cheerfully bore it.[37] Apparently she heard nothing of her release but she did find out that the tribes gathered there were determined to take over Texas, Mexico and ultimately the United States.

> They said that the white men had now driven the Indian bands from the East to the West, and now they would work this plan to drive the whites out of the country; they said that the white people had now got almost all around them, and in a short time they would drive them again.[38]

Rachel Plummer's narrative includes short descriptions of various prairie animals and a discussion of the Comanche way of curing, cooking, and religious beliefs. She also made note of the treatment of women.

> The women wait on the men—all the men do is kill the meat—the women butchers it, dresses their skins, makes their mockosins [sic] and other clothing, herds their horses, saddles and packs and unsaddles and unpacks them, build their camps, dresses their meats, etc.[39]

In June of 1837 Mexican traders came to the Comanche camp. They made an offer to but Rachel Plummer which the Comanche finally accepted. Her new owners took her to Santa Fe where they released her to the Americans. The Americans helped her collect enough money to get to Independence,

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[37]Ibid., 11.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid., 14.

Missouri where she had originally lived. Early in 1838 she was reunited with her father, husband and friends.

> But oh! dreadful reflection, where [are] my little children? One of them is no more . . . . My body is covered with scars which I am bound to carry to my grave; my constitution broke—but above all and every trouble which haunts my distracted mind is WHERE IS MY POOR LITTLE JAMES PRATT![40]

Rachel Plummer died of tuberculosis exactly one year after her return to her family.

CYNTHIA PARKER

> She retained but the vaguest remembrance of her people—as dim and flitting as the phantoms of a dream; she was accustomed now to the wild life she led.[41]

Cynthia Parker did not write a narrative of her experiences among the Comanche but her captivity and release were documented by others, and merit mention here. She was a member of the party living at Parker's Fort, Texas, and was taken captive during the raid in May 1836 along with Rachel Plummer, Elizabeth Kellogg, and her brother, John Parker. Cynthia Parker was eight years old at the time of her captivity, and remained among the Comanche twenty-four years. She is also noted as the mother of a famous Comanche chief and warrior, Quanah Parker. James De Shields wrote of Cynthia Parker in 1886 after Quanah Parker placed an advertisement in a Fort Worth newspaper requesting a photo

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[40]Ibid., 15.

[41]James De Shields, Cynthia Ann Parker: the Story of her Capture (New York: Garland Publishers, 1976), v.

of his mother. His inquiry "revived interest in a tragedy which has always been enveloped in a greater degree of mournful romance and pathos than any of the soul-stirring episodes of our pioneer life."[42] De Shields then compiled Cynthia Parker's story from family members, various people who had seen her during her captivity, and those who aided in her recapture.

The Parker family moved to Texas in 1833 and James De Shields noted they were

> truly the advance guard of civilization of that part of our frontier . . . . [and] here the struggling colonist remained, engaged in the avocations of a rural life . . . in the enjoyment of a life of Arcadian simplicity, virtue and contentment, until the latter part of the year 1835, . . .[43]

It was then that the tribes of the southern plains as well as Mexicans began raiding the American settlers. Some accounts say up to seven hundred Comanche and Kiowa attacked Parker's Fort in May 1836. They killed four and captured five.

> The braves, gathered around with their yet bloody, dripping scalps, [and] commenced their usual war dance. They danced, screamed, yelled, stamping upon their prisoners, beating them with bows until their own blood came near strangling them. The remainder of the night these frail women suffered and had to listen to the cries and groans of their tender little children.[44]

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[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid., 12.

[44]Ibid., 22.

The captives were divided between a number of tribes. Cynthia Parker and her brother, John remained together. "Cynthia" and her brother "gradually forgot the language, manners and customs of their own people, and became thorough Comanches as the long years stole slowly away."[45] Throughout the years numerous unsuccessful attempts were made to ascertain their whereabouts, or fate. Five years into her captivity a Colonel Williams located Cynthia Parker and spoke to her Comanche family. He was told that all the goods he owned were not enough to ransom her. When Colonel Williams spoke to Cynthia Parker he found she could no longer speak English. She remained among the Comanche and eventually married a Comanche war chief for whom De Shields noted she performed "all the lavish offices which savageism and Indian custom assigns as the duty of a wife."[46]

By 1856 the area around Parker's Fort had become densely populated which caused continued raids by both the southern tribes and Mexicans. During a battle between the Comanche and the American settlers Cynthia Parker was said to be "as fearful of capture at the hands of the hated whites, as years ago—immediately after the massacre of Parker's Fort—she had been anxious for the same."[47] It was

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[45]Ibid., 27.

[46]Ibid., 31.

[47]Ibid., 44.

during one of these raids in 1860 that Cynthia Parker was recaptured and returned to Parker's Fort.

> After camping for the night Cynthia Ann kept crying, and thinking it was caused from fear of death at our hands, I had the Mexican tell her that we recognized her as one of our own people, and would not harm her . . . .[48]

Cynthia Parker was thirty-four years old, married to a Comanche warrior, and the mother of three children at the time of her recapture.

> She remembered not one word of English, [nor anything] respecting her identity; but she had forgotten absolutely everything, apparently, at all connected with her family or past history.

She was welcomed home by her relatives "as savage-like and dark of complexion as she was . . . ."[49] Cynthia Parker attempted to escape numerous times and had to be closely watched. She was taught to spin and weave along with other domestic duties, and became a useful member of the household. She died four years after her return home, in 1864.

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[48]Ibid., 65.

[49]Ibid., 71.

CHAPTER IV

CAPTIVITIES: 1813-1855

The following narratives span the years 1813 to 1855 and are from various tribes and geographic areas. They are included here because they tell of similar events and echo many of the sentiments seen in previous narratives. The native tribes involved were undergoing similar pressures as detailed in the cases of both the Sioux and the Comanche. While the underlying events are not the identical, from the early eighteen hundreds changes were occurring rapidly in the United States and the territories that were accordingly effecting the various native American tribes.

EUNICE BARBER

> to have quit the world at this moment, would scarcely have cost a single pang—my thought was ultimately filled on a happier state of existence, beyond the tortures I endured . . . .[1]

Eunice Barber's narrative, written in 1817, tells of her six week captivity in 1813 among the Seminole Indians in Georgia. She stated on the night of January 26th her husband "imprudently retired to bed, without taking the

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[1]Eunice Barber, Narrative of the Tragical Death of Darius Barber (New York: Garland Publishers, 1977), 6.

precaution to secure the doors of the house as usual."[2] They were awakened that night by an attack of nearly forty Seminole Indians who Eunice Barber stated, while "brandishing their knives before me with frightful grimaces and a terrible shout, as if about to dispatch me— . . . tomahawked and scalped my poor children."[3] Eunice Barber's husband was also killed. The Seminoles then plundered the house and commanded her to accompany them to their village. They travelled six days to the Seminole village, where, before entering Eunice Barber stated "they daubed my face and body with black and red paint, [and] dressed my head with feathers, in imitation of their own!"[4] The group was greeted by two to three hundred people who exhibited "much apparent satisfaction" at seeing the scalps of Eunice Barber's children. Her new home was a wigwam, unfit as a "shelter for dumb beasts."[5] Her owner was a warrior with whom she went on hunting trips, her hands were always tied, except when she was made to carry back the game he killed.

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[2]Ibid., 5.

[3]Ibid., 5-6.

[4]Ibid., 7.

[5]Ibid., 8.

> After being compelled to march through no pleasant path, in this painful manner, for many a tedious mile . . . my hands were now immoderately swelled from the lightness of the ligature, and the pain had become intolerable . . . I implored of my savage master to unbind me or to dispatch me at once and take my scalp![6]

Eunice Barber's narrative mentions many different aspects of daily life in the Seminole village. She made special note of the torture of native captives and of the stoic manner in which they endured their pain.

> What is very extraordinary, not a groan, nor a sigh, nor a distortion of counternance escaped the victims during their torments—there indeed seemed during the whole distressing scene a contest between them, and their tormentors, which should out do the other, they in inflicting the most horrid pains, or the prisoners in enduring them![7]

She also told of the daily comings and goings of the Seminole warriors.

> During my captivity I almost daily saw hordes of savages returning from their expeditions against the white settlements, loaded with human scalps and dragging into captivity more or less of their defenseless inhabitants.[8]

It gave her a great deal of pleasure she noted, to see the warriors return with their own numbers diminished, knowing that the whites had killed them. Eunice Barber also commented on the practice of adopting prisoners as replacements for deceased relatives.

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[6]Ibid., 9-10.

[7]Ibid., 14.

[8]Ibid.

> He was then treated as a friend and a brother, and they appeared soon to love him with the same tenderness as if he stood in the place of their deceased friend. In short, he had no other marks of captivity, but his not being suffered to return to his own nation, for should he have attempted this, he would have been punished with death.[9]

After five weeks of captivity Eunice Barber saw an opportunity to escape and proceeded that night into a swamp and then on to a path which led her to a white settlement.

> [I was] nearly destitute of cloathing [sic], and entirely unacquainted with the method of traveling through a wild wilderness, . . . but certain death, either by hunger or wild beasts, seemed preferable rather than to be in the power of beings whose awful barbarity was still fresh in my mind.[10]

A week after her escape she heard "the pleasing sound of the woodman's ax . . . hastened to the spot, and to my inexpressible joy, found myself not mistaken—it was a christian friend."[11]

HANNAH LEWIS

> None but mothers can figure to themselves my wretched situation—to travel bareheaded and barefooted with my lovely babe, and my too innocent captive children, through a dismal forest, to unknown regions, was distressing beyond description . . . the cries of my poor little infant, were such as could not fail to operate upon the feelings of any but those of an unmerciful cannibal![12]

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[9]Ibid., 17.

[10]Ibid., 21-22.

[11]Ibid., 23.

[12]Hannah Lewis, Narrative of Captivity and Sufferings (New York: Garland Publishers, 1977), 6.

Hannah Lewis moved near St. Louis in 1814 with her husband.

> As we were now in the neighborhood of several tribes of Indians of whose friendly disposition we had much reason to suspect, my husband, for the first nine months was induced to reside in the fort of St. Louis.[13]

After a time, Hannah Lewis stated the Indians feigned friendliness and she and her husband moved out of the fort. On May 25, 1815, the Sauk and Fox Indians attacked the settlers in the area around St. Louis and Hannah Lewis was taken captive among them for nearly one year.

> they tore my little infant from my arms and menacing me with instant death, by their motions, if I attempted resistance, led me out of the house, [and] they next brought out my Son [sic] and daughter . . . .[14]

The warriors collected what goods they could carry from the houses. The captives' hands were then tied and they were led one hundred and twenty miles to the Sauk and Fox settlement. Hannah Lewis stated that she and the other captives were driven like beasts to the slaughter, "one savage always marching forward of us, and one in the rear, with their tomahawks uplifted, ready to dispatch us at a single blow, had we attempted an escape."[15] After about twenty miles the group stopped and Hannah Lewis and the other captives were offered food, albeit "a scanty

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[13]Ibid., 1.

[14]Ibid., 4.

[15]Ibid., 5.

allowance."[16] On the third day of travel Hannah Lewis stated she was nearly too weak to continue and hoped

> that the savages would dispatch me with their tomahawks! death, indeed would have at once put an end to my sufferings, but the idea of leaving my helpless babe, and my two other children in the hands of my unfeeling captor, was indeed too distressing to conceive of.[17]

Before the party of warriors and captives reached the Sauk and Fox village the captives were given new clothing and their faces were daubed with vermillion and bear grease. Once in the village the captives were made to run the gauntlet.

> the men, women and children on each side being armed with sticks and bludgeons, we experienced the severest beating from these inhuman monsters as we passed—[18]

Hannah Lewis' baby was given to a native woman whose own child had recently died. The captives were then taken to different houses to their new families. "My house was not the most agreeable . . . the reader cannot imagine [that it] could be very pleasing to one accustomed to civilized life."[19]

Throughout her narrative Hannah Lewis noted that what pained her most was her separation from her children. And after eleven months a captive she felt she would never know

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[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., 7.

[18]Ibid., 9.

[19]Ibid.

what happened to her children nor ever escape. "No pains were spared by the savage monsters to inflict me by every means that their inventive faculties could give birth to—"[20] But she did not tell of the many brutalities she stated occurred. "Were I to record every act of cruelty exercised toward me, by the savage monster, who claimed me as their property, it would swell a volume to a much larger size."[21]

Unexpectedly one day her older son was able to meet with her. "His appearance was truly savage, having been taken into favour by one of the Chiefs, he had been persuaded to adopt their mode of dress, manners, & c."[22] Her son had been adopted by the tribe and was a favorite of his native family, and due to this was no longer treated as a prisoner but was free to go where he wanted. During their meeting Hannah Lewis' son told her of his experiences among his adopted family, who treated

> him as if he had been one of their own children . . . the eight months he had been with them, he had learned their language, and had adopted their mode of dressing and painting himself . . . and had become a tolerable marksman with the bow and arrow.[23]

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[20]Ibid., 10.

[21]Ibid., 11-12.

[22]Ibid., 12.

[23]Ibid., 15.

Her son also stated he had planned an escape for himself and his mother. Hannah Lewis lived among the Sauk and Fox for nearly two years, "conveyed to a wild wilderness and retained by an unmerciful race of beings, as their lawful prisoner!"[24] After another ten months had passed since her visit with her son one day he approached her "with all the frightful grimaces peculiar to a savage, he brandished his long knife around my head, expressing at the same time to my master, with his permission, a willingness to take my scalp!"[25] She did not realize it was her son at first, and that this act was a part of his plan for escape. That same evening he returned and together they left the village "without meeting a single Savage to molest us, or anything to retard our flight, in five days we savely [sic] arrived at the fort of St. Louis."[26] She did not mention what happened to her two other children and presumably they remained captive among the Sauk and Fox Indians.

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[24]Ibid., 22.

[25]Ibid., 23.

[26]Ibid., 24.

> I resolved, therefore, to live if possible, and ever afterward, even when my trials and tribulations thickened darkest about me, this hope, with its concomitant feelings grew more and more intense.[27]

Gertrude Morgan was taken captive on three occasions beginning in 1855. First she spent nearly three years among the Pawnees. After she escaped she was held by the Kaskaskias for two years, and her final captivity was for a number of weeks in a Confederate camp. During her initial captivity she became noted by the Pawnees as "great medicine," giving her a sort of fame among them as well as neighboring tribes, and known as "The Great White Medicine." Her narrative, written in 1866, told of her family background, her husband's journey west to California in 1850, and her subsequent travels to meet him in 1855. The party she travelled with was attacked by Pawnee and only Gertrude Morgan survived. She noted that "being the only prisoner, [I] soon became the centre of all observation, especially with the women, who universally bestowed on me nothing but the most malignant scowls."[28] While she was captive she attempted to aid her captors as was needed and it was in tending to her captor's gunshot wound that she first became known as "Great Medicine." Although Gertrude

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[27]Gertrude Morgan, Gertrude Morgan; or, Life and Adventures Among the Indians of the Far West (New York: Garland Publishers, 1978), 22.

[28]Ibid.

Morgan mentions the brutal treatment she received a number of times she does not elaborate on exactly what occurred. She does, however, describe a number of situations in which her life was endangered. One incident she recalled involved not a "true Indian" chief, but an escaped mulatto slave who had become a Pawnee chief. He was determined to take Gertrude Morgan as a wife. In a fight which followed Gertrude Morgan killed this man.

> Never, never shall I forget, nor shall I ever be able truly to describe, the feelings that seized me as I looked down upon the silent and now harmless giant, whose herculian arms could, a moment previous, have crushed my life . . . for an instant a pang of sorrow wrung my heart, and then followed that peculiar sensation, or self-conviction of having shed the blood of a fellow being.[29]

Her thoughts soon turned to what would be her fate for having killed a chief, but after she told her story to the head chief she found that all was forgiven. "Upon hearing this I fell upon my knees, and thanked my Heavenly Father that even far away in the wilderness, and in the midst of barbarous enemies, He had not forgotten me . . . ."[30]

For the most part Gertrude Morgan resigned herself to her captive situation, but very soon after she killed the mulatto chief a "strange, wild idea that had taken possession of me, was this idea to escape, . . ."[31] She

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[29]Ibid., 28.

[30]Ibid., 29.

[31]Ibid., 30.

also noted in retrospect, that had she known what lay ahead of her she never would have made the attempt. She took a horse, as the opportunity presented itself, and escaped. She rode for a number of days without food or water.

> So terrible were the feelings that oppressed me, as I continued riding hither and thither, that I wished myself back a hundred times with my wild and savage captors, the Pawnees.[32]

The irony of her situation was that she ended up riding in a large circle and found herself back in the Pawnee village. Expecting the worse, she was astonished at the response she received.

> I galloped straight into the village, through groups of dusky captors, who, to my utter astonishment, received me with marks of joy and respect . . . the savages looked upon my journey as "Medicine," or "a great mystery."[33]

Gertrude Morgan eventually made her escape from the Pawnee only to find herself among the Kaskaskias where she spent two years. She noted she did not really consider herself a captive because this tribe was friendly with the whites. Although she assured the Kaskaskias that she would remain with them always they kept a close watch on her and made it difficult for her to make an escape attempt.

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[32]Ibid., 32.

[33]Ibid., 34.

> Since my first effort to escape from the Pawnees I had gained a vast amount of information which it was necessary that I should possess to make certain success . . . . On the day I finally resolved to start for the Fort [Leavenworth], I arranged the most minute particulars of my future programme with the utmost precision.[34]

Two days out she came across

> a score of naked savages . . . I will not dwell upon the rough treatment I received at the hands of these savages, who, had I been a common prisoner, instead of "The Great Medicine," would have soon tomahawked me; neither is it necessary that I should minutely record the events of my subsequent life among them.[35]

Gertrude Morgan described very little of her captivity with this tribe, nor did she relate who they were. She did tell of speaking to an agent from General Pike in 1861 who helped make an arrangement for her to travel with them to Arkansas and be released. Along the way she ended up in a Confederate camp which she then escaped one night when the soldiers were drunk. Finally she made her way to a Union encampment where she found her husband wounded. She learned from him that he had returned from the gold fields of California when he heard of her captivity only to be taken captive by the Kaskaskias himself, for five years. Gertrude Morgan and her husband later made their way to New York where she resided when she wrote her narrative.

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[34]Ibid., 35.

[35]Ibid., 37.

OLIVE OATMAN

> I saw but little reason to expect anything else than the spending of my years among them, and I had no anxiety that they should be many. I saw around me none but savages, and (dreadful as was the thought) among whom I must spend my days.[36]

Olive Oatman was travelling along the Sante Fe trail to California in 1851 with her family when she and her sister were taken captive by Apache Indians. Her narrative of five years among the Apache and later the Mohave Indians was written by Royal Stratton not long after Olive's return, using the recollections of Olive and her brother, Lorenzo. Royal Stratton made his sentiments very clear throughout the narrative and it is considered one of the more racist and chauvinistic narratives of this period.[37] What is described in the following was taken from Olive Oatman's recollections which Stratton included in his narrative. It is therefore difficult to know with certainty that what was written was in fact from Olive Oatman and not merely Stratton's reinterpretation of the events. Clearly Stratton was sympathetic to the Oatmans plight and highly negative against the natives, but he left out a number of interesting aspects of the Oatman captivity.

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[36]Royal B. Stratton, Captivity of the Oatman Girls (New York: Garland Publishers, 1977), 187.

[37]Glenda Riley, Women and Indians on the Frontier, 1825-1915 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 20.

Olive Oatman was sixteen years old when her family left Independence, Missouri along with fifty men, women, and children to establish an American colony along the Gulf of California

> to form a new settlement, remote from the prejudices, pride, arrogance, and caste that obtain in the more opulent, and less sympathizing portions of a stern civilization.[38]

Olive recalled the beautiful weather they enjoyed in the first days of their journey. But as they headed into more arid, barren country, the members of the wagon train began to have trouble, disagreed upon the course they should take, and the group separated. The Oatmans were among twenty persons and eight wagons who continued along the Santa Fe Trail. There were "indications of hostility among the tribes of Indians—representatives of whom frequently gave us the most unwelcome greetings—were becoming more frequent and alarming."[39] Olive noted that her father "had always been led to believe that the Indians could be so treated as to avoid difficulty with them, . . . this might be fine with Iowa Indians but not with the fierce Apache."[40] The Apache asked for food and were given both food and tobacco though the Oatmans had little food to spare. Suddenly the Apache turned upon the Oatman family.

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[38]Royal B. Stratton, 18.

[39]Ibid., 42.

[40]Ibid., 70.

> I was so bewildered and taken by surprise by the suddennes [sic] of their movements, and their deafening yells, that it was some little time before I could realize the horrors of my situation.[41]

All but three of her family were killed—Olive and her sister, Mary Ann were taken captive, and their brother, Lorenzo was struck down and thought dead.

On the journey to the Apache encampment the two girls were offered food, "but in the most insulting and taunting manner, continually making merry over every indication of grief in us . . . ."[42] While Olive thought of ending her life and even asked her Apache captors to kill her, she could not die with the thought of her little sister still among the Apache. She noted Mary Ann seemed to have "become utterly indifferent to all about her; and, [was] wrapped in a dreamy reverie, relieved of all care of life and death . . . ."[43]

They travelled some two hundred miles to the Apache village and were greeted by three hundred Apache "living in all the extremes of filth and degradation that the most abandoned humanity ever fathomed."[44] While in the village the two girls were made to serve under the women who were

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[41]Ibid., 73.

[42]Ibid., 75.

[43]Ibid., 106.

[44]Ibid., 114.

"the laborers, and principal burden-bearers," who treated them with "a severity more intolerable than that by which they [the Apache women] were subjected . . .by their merciless lords."[45]

Within a few months the two girls had learned the Apache language enough to converse and understand quite well. And the Apache women, especially the younger women, asked many questions of Olive and Mary Ann Oatman. They wanted to know about the whites and how they lived, how many there were, about marriage, and how white women were treated. Olive and Mary Ann Oatman spoke among themselves many times of making an escape or of possible rescue but Olive stated they seldom had any knowledge from outside the village to warrant any hope of rescue. Although the early time with the Apache was difficult Olive noted "after we had been among these Apache several months, their conduct towards us somewhat changed. They became more lenient and merciful, especially to my sister."[46] Olive and Mary Ann Oatman were with the Apache for approximately one year when they were sold to the Mohave in trade for food, and the girls learned they had a three hundred and fifty mile trek to the Mohave village. "We had not proceeded far ere it was painfully impressed upon our feet, if not our aching hearts,

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[45]Ibid., 116.

[46]Ibid., 120.

that this trail to a second captivity was no improvement on the first."[47] Olive Oatman stated that on the journey one Mohave woman showed kindness if not "a deep sympathy for us and a commiseration of our desolate condition."[48] When they arrived at the Mohave village the two captive girls were taken aback by the beauty of the valley but also noted they were greeted by "filthy-looking Mohaves, and their more filthy-looking children, who would come up [and], look rudely in our faces . . . ."[49]

Olive Oatman described the Mohave method of agriculture as well as their basic mode of subsistence. She was overall not impressed with either. "What was to them a rich harvest, would be considered in Yankee land or in the Western States, a poor compensation for so much time and plodding labor."[50] But one of the Mohaves claimed "We have enough to satisfy us—you Americans . . . work hard and it does you no good; we enjoy ourselves."[51] While at first none of the Mohave seemed interested in the two captives nor inquired into their welfare, "in a few days they began to direct us to work in various ways, such as bringing wood and

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[47]Ibid., 133.

[48]Ibid., 137.

[49]Ibid., 135.

[50]Ibid., 143.

[51]Ibid., 145.

water, and to perform various errands of convenience to them."[52] Again the Oatman girls found themselves virtual slaves to not only the adults but the children as well.

> In this respect it was very much as among the Apaches. Their whimpering, idiotic children, of not half a dozen years, very soon learned to drive us about with all the authority of an eastern lord.[53]

During their captivity among the Mohave Mary Ann Oatman died. "She gradually sank away without much pain, and all the time happy. She had not spent a day in our captivity without asking God to pardon, to bless, and to save."[54] Olive Oatman blamed the Mohave for her sister's death because of the lack of food due to crop failures. She claimed that the "unfeeling savages" watched "her gradual but sure approach to the vale of death, from want of food that their laziness alone prevented us having in abundance; . . . "[55]

Throughout all of her trials Olive noted there were two Mohaves, the wife and daughter of the chief, who showed some kindness to her. And she stated

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[52]Ibid., 143.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Ibid., 159.

[55]Ibid.

> I learned to chide my hasty judgement against ALL the Indian race, and also, that kindness is not always a stranger to the untutored and untamed bosom. I saw in this, that their savageness is as much a fruit of their ignorance as for any want of a susceptibility to feel the throbbings of true humanity, if they could be properly appealed to.[56]

In February of 1856 the Mohaves were told that a Yuma Indian was on his way to return Olive to the whites at Fort Yuma. When he arrived he told the Mohave that the whites knew of Olive Oatman's location and were "arming a sufficient number to surround the whole Indian nations, and that they thus intended to destroy them unless they gave up the last captive among them."[57] After some consideration the Mohave decided to release Olive. At this news she stated

> and while yet in their presence, I found I could no longer control my feelings, and I burst into tears, no longer able to deny myself of this expressing the weight of feeling that struggled for relief and utterance within me.[58]

She was taken to Fort Yuma where she was reunited with her brother, Lorenzo, and later went to live in Oregon with relatives.

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[56]Ibid., 165.

[57]Ibid., 211.

[58]Ibid., 225.

CHAPTER V

TREATMENT OF FEMALE CAPTIVES

> With blanched faces we beheld the horrible scene and clasped our helpless children closer to us. Then fearful thoughts of torture crowded into our minds . . . .[1]

The treatment of captives was often written both emotionally as well as physically upon their lives. The female captives were taken from their homes, and their husbands and children, and often killed immediately. Wilhemina Carrigan, seven years old at the time of her captivity, witnessed the deaths of her family, as did Abigail Gardiner, Olive Oatman, and many of the women who were taken captive. Although children were often taken, and later adopted into the tribe, mothers also many times saw their children killed in the initial attacks upon their homes or later, during their captivities. Rachel Plummer witnessed her six week old baby, born during her captivity among the Comanche, killed and "literally torn to pieces."[2] Often within the captivity narrative one perceives the extent of emotions wrenched out of female captives concerning the well being of their children. Lavinia

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[1]Fanny Kelly, 399.

[2]Rachel Plummer, 10.

Eastlick, stated of her experiences during the Sioux Uprising

> I thought then, and think now, that they were torturing children. It was a great punishment to me to hear the children cry and moaning under the cruel tortures of the Indians. I thought that they were my children that I heard.[3]

Sarah Wakefield commented that upon hearing that she would be killed and her children raised as Sioux she determined to kill her children rather than let that occur.[4] During their captivities these women were then made to travel often hundreds of miles through unknown territories, under extreme duress, often with little or no proper clothing or shoes. Ann Coleson, taken by the Sioux in 1863, noted, if the captives could not keep up the pace "they would sear the tenderest parts of the victim's body with lighted pine torches, . . ."[5] Dolly Webster, captive among the Comanche in 1837, said

> they striped me naked of nearly all my clothes, compelled me to travel between them, . . . frequently pierced me with spears, having the scalps of our unfortunate slain on their points . . . .[6]

The lack of food is often mentioned among the hardships endured during captivity. And many women mention having their first "civilized" meal at the end of their

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[3]Frederick Drimmer, ed., 322.

[4]Sarah Wakefield, 17.

[5]Miss Coleson's Narrative, 23.

[6]Benjamin Dolbeare, 10.

captivities with great delight. Olive Oatman stated that it was the lack of food that caused the death of her sister in 1855. She cited not only the drought that occurred that year but more importantly, the Mohave's own laziness and lack of agricultural efficiency that prevented them from having enough food.[7] Sarah Ann Horn, captive among the Comanche, along with her two children in 1833, stated that "the moanings of my dear children for bread and water, would have induced me, had it been possible, to have torn my flesh from my bones to appease their hunger . . . ."[8]

While there were cases of the warriors withholding food from their captives on the journeys to their camps, it was most often the case that they simply did not have large supplies of food with them on their raiding parties and so both they and their captives went without until they were back at their encampment. Jane Wilson, captive among the Comanche stated she had gone without food for two days, but she also stated that "the Indians depended on hunting for their subsistence, and sometimes had nothing to eat themselves . . . ."[9] The Sioux Uprising of 1862 was in part caused because of the crop failures and lateness of the annuities. The Sioux hunting grounds were being encroached

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[7]Royal B. Stratton, 159.

[8]Sarah Ann Horn, 19.

[9]Jane Wilson, 21.

upon by white settlers and the previous year the Sioux were on the verge of starvation. Jannette De Camp Sweet noted there had been a "great amount of suffering among the Indians, as their crops had been bad from drought . . . . [and] much sickness attendant upon starvation, of which there were actual cases."[10] Sarah Ann Horn somewhat tritely noted that

> It had been one of the severest items in my bodily sufferings, that I could get no coffee, nor anything of the kind, that was warm, to take in the morning, during my captivity.[11]

Some captives endured whippings and beatings at the hands of their captors as well as emotional hardships. This would seem to be more likely among the Comanche captivities than among the Sioux during the period examined, but Mary Barber, who married a Sioux chief in 1867, spoke of severe beatings and whippings. Other times beatings or death were threatened. Mary Schwandt, a Sioux captive, told of her captor threatening to kill her, "brandishing his tomahawk over me a few times, then laughed, put it back in his belt and walked away, still laughing."[12] Rachel Plummer stated that she was whipped and beaten "so that my flesh was never

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[10]Captivities of Mrs. J. E. De Camp Sweet, Nancy McClure, and Mary Schwandt, 356.

[11]Sarah Ann Horn, 47.

[12]Captivities of Mrs. J. E. De Camp Sweet, Nancy McClure, and Mary Schwandt, 470.

well from bruises and wounds during my captivity."[13] Sarah Ann Horn chided her captor for hitting her young son and then said "with his whip he gave me many cruel stripes, but so much keener was the anguish of my soul, than any that even a savage could inflict upon my almost naked body."[14] Jane Wilson, nine months pregnant when her husband was killed and she was taken captive by the Comanche, stated

> I never saw them exhibit the first sign of pity towards me. It made no difference how badly I was hurt, . . . they would apply their riding whips, or gunsticks, or the end of a lariat, to my unprotected body with the greatest violence.[15]

Another aspect of many of the captivities is the mention of clothing and the ritual change into "Indian" dress. Captives described being made to change into a "squaw dress" and moccasins, their faces were often painted, and their hair was cut or oiled and braided, depending upon the tribe they were with. The change back into "civilized" dress was apparently just as important upon the captives' return. Sarah Wakefield noted that she was "changed from a white woman into a squaw. How humiliating it was to adopt such a dress, even forced by such circumstances."[16] Abigail Gardiner also told of changing into clothing given to her by

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[13]Rachel Plummer, 337.

[14]Sarah Ann Horn, 33.

[15]Jane Wilson, 20.

[16]Sarah Wakefield, 16.

her captors. Her shoes were taken from her and she was given moccasins. "These proved warm and comfortable for walking in winter, and (no doubt contrary to the wishes of the Indians,) were better . . . than shoes."[17] Jane Wilson spoke of a similar change and also mentioned that the young boys taken captive had "their faces painted Indian fashion, and they looked like young savages. They appeared to enjoy this new mode of life, and were never treated with excessive cruelty."[18] Their treatment may have been different from Jane Wilson's since the two young boys were apparently intended as adoptees, and were never released.

In the nineteenth century the general belief was that female captives were carried off by their native American captors, and tortured and raped. It is also known that captivity narratives which told of sexual mistreatment appealed to nineteenth century readers and helped the sales of the narratives. While rape may not have always occurred there were numerous accounts describing brutal treatment. Rape, itself, was rarely if ever mentioned within the female captivity narratives. Often the word and details were omitted by the editors, or the author simply used words such as "insult" or "outrage" to mask what both they and the reader knew was rape. It was also common for a female

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[17]L. P. Lee, 30.

[18]Jane Wilson, 20.

captive to be taken as a wife by one of her warrior captors. George Miles observed that some studies propose that Comanche warriors "routinely raped and beat their women captives, as much to assert their authority and break their captives' spirits as to indulge their libidos . . . ."[19] Yet some Comanche captives mention no such abuse. Susan Brownmiller in Against Our Will stated there is a "natural reluctance on the part of women to admit that sexual abuse has occurred," but Glenda Riley in Women and Indians on the Frontier takes a somewhat different position.[20] Riley stated that there was apparently little reluctance by female captives to discuss rape in their narratives or publicly, as a number of women did in military testimonies against their captors, or in appeals to the United States Congress for compensation for the indignities they had suffered. She stated there is simply "little support for the idea that American Indians routinely sexually abused their female captives."[21] It would seem, though, that of the captivities researched here the female captives did not outwardly

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[19]George Miles, Introduction to A Narrative of the Captivity and Suffering of Dolly Webster Among the Camanche Indians in Texas, by Benjamin Dolbeare (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1986), x.

[20]Susan Brownmiller, Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 152.

[21]Glenda Riley, Women and Indians on the Frontier, 1825-1915, 209.

discuss the issues of rape, and that many were apparently raped.

Many of the women taken captive in the Sioux Uprising in 1862 said nothing of any kind of physical mistreatment other than at times a heavy work burden. In fact many of the women noted that they were treated with compassion by their Sioux captors. Wilhemina Carrigan, seven years old at the time of her captivity, stated she was protected by two Sioux women she knew from their visits with her family before the attack and was treated as a family member. Mary Schwandt also noted that she was aided by Sioux women as "many a time, when the savage and brutal Indians were threatening to kill all the prisoners, and it was feared they would, she and her mother hid me . . . ."[22] Sophia Huggins, too, was aided by Sioux women during her captivity. She stated the women had become quite fond of her and they "told her she must keep closely concealed, with her children, so long as they remained in the village."[23] While native women apparently came to the aid of captives on occasion this was not the case during Jane Wilson's captivity. Sarah Wakefield stated "I found . . . that I was with some of my best friends in the Shakopee Band."[24] She

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[22]Captivities of Mrs. J. E. Sweet, Nancy McClure, and Mary Schwandt, 471.

[23]Mrs. Huggins, the Minnesota Captive, 10.

[24]Sarah Wakefield, 22.

went on to note that "the Indians were all very kind to me; they brought me books and papers to read, and I would make them shirts, so as to return their favors."[25]

The captive experience took on harsher treatment for some women. Ann Coleson, after witnessing the death of her family by the Sioux in the New Ulm attack of 1862 "was immediately secured, stripped naked, and subjected to the most horrible of personal outrages."[26] She later stated that she was intended as a wife for one of her captors.

> It will be readily concluded that I objected to this arrangement, though I willingly consented to prepare his food and keep his wigwam in order, which was no slight job . . . .[27]

Gertrude Morgan, on the other hand, captive among the Pawnee in 1855, stated

> I deem it only justice to the Indians, to say, that in their primitive state, far removed from the frontier, the crime of ravishing captive women, so common and hellish a vice among civilized nations, is entirely unknown.

And she noted that while "an American savage will mercilessly butcher white women," some "chivalrous honor prevents him from scalping or raping them."[28] One can only imagine that Gertrude Morgan did not believe or did not hear the stories of scalping and rape that had occurred to other

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[25]Ibid., 43.

[26]Miss Coleson's Narrative, 21.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Gertrude Morgan, 29.

women, or that she was merely expressing what she saw while among the Pawnee and extended those sentiments to all native Americans. At the same time though, Gertrude Morgan noted very little compassion among her captors. The women, she said "universally bestowed on me nothing but the most malignant scowls."[29] Jane Wilson wrote that "every indignity was offered to my person which the imagination can conceive. And I am at a loss to know how I lived through the barbarous treatment . . . ."[30]

Given the views of some of their rescuers one can understand some reluctance to admit sexual mistreatment. Rescuing captives, especially female captives was stated as a prime objective of military operations on the plains in the 1860s and 1870s. This helped to gain support from the public for offenses against native Americans, who often provided supplies, housing, and civilian volunteers. While the rescue of female captives may have been the official objective, some of the military officers, Generals Sheridan, and Custer among them, held different beliefs. General Sheridan

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[29]Ibid., 22.

[30]Jane Wilson, 21.

> believed that captive white women would certainly have been raped by their Indian captors, . . . and brutalized. Such women, in his view were no longer worth rescuing, having suffered the "fate worse than death."[31]

He felt female captives, and their families would be better off if the captive was never rescued and they should remain among their captors, or even better if they should die "by murder, suicide, or even the providentially directed bullet of a would-be rescuer." These "views were far from exceptional, as the treatment of many returned captives from this period suggests."[32] Also a consideration in the open admission of sexual mistreatment by a returned captive was that of public and even familial censure. White female captives, considered "defiled" within their own society, might well decide to remain with their captors where their status as a native wife was relatively secure, rather than return to a questionable future among white society.[33]

It is of course impossible to know to what extent the experiences these female captives described were in fact true. Some captivity narratives were undoubtedly tainted by personal prejudices as well as biases of the time in which they lived, but even if only half of what they described was

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[31]Richard Slotkin, The Fatal Environment (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 403-404.

[32]Ibid., 404.

[33]Susan Brownmiller, 152.

true these women survived both violent and brutal ordeals just by the very nature of the captive experience. One must read the comments of mistreatment, whether rape, beatings or the denial of food, with a great deal of caution. Authors of the narratives were quite aware of the nature of their reading public and their motives were not always to tell an accurate account of what occurred during their captivities.

CHAPTER VI

THE RETURNED CAPTIVE

> we changed our squaw outfit for new calico dress, and really began to feel as though we were white folks again.[1]

Little is ever said of captives' lives after their return to white settlements and often we can only speculate on the effect their captivities may have had on their lives. Authors of the captivity narratives often mention only the town or state where the captive went to live. On occasion there are comments from relatives or others stating the general mental and emotional state of the newly returned captive.

> Some women experience particular difficulties in adjustment because they missed their native children, [or] because they found themselves rejected by white society due to their "contamination" by their Indian captors . . . .[2]

Fanny Kelly noted that upon her return she felt ill at ease, and people told her that her "eyes wore a strangely wild expression, like those of a person constantly in fear of some unknown dread."[3] There are some returned captives who

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[1]Urania White, 424.

[2]Glenda Riley, Women and Indians on the Frontier, 19.

[3]Fanny Kelly, 212.

discuss the events of their return. This seems especially so when they found themselves destitute, with neither a family to return to nor a means to support themselves. Sarah Larimer stated that although they were thankful for their release from captivity, "it was impossible to avoid depression when we thought of our hapless situation, reduced to poverty in that far—distant and peculiarly barren country . . . ."[4] On the rare occasion there is mention of children born of a "captive marriage." One would have to imagine that if the treatment of these female captives was as stated there would have been a number of children born either during or after captivity.

After her ransom and return, Olive Oatman, five years among the Apache and Mohave, "spent most of her time longing for and attempting to return to her native husband and children." A friend stated that even four years after her return "she was a grieving unsatisfied woman, who shook belief in civilization."[5] Olive Oatman's narrative written by Royal Stratton made no mention of these things. Cynthia Parker also apparently had little desire to be "rescued." Captive at eight years of age, she was adopted and raised as a member of a Comanche family, and was said to have forgotten all concerning her family and backround, and could

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[4]Sarah Larimer, 117.

[5]Glenda Riley, Women and Indians on the Frontier, 210.

no longer speak English. Cynthia Parker had three children by the warrior chief she married, and the author noted "we are assured loved him with a species of fierce passion, and wifely devotion; for some fifteen years after her escape."[6] It was said that during the battle in which she was recaptured that she seemed as "fearful of capture at the hands of the hated whites, as years ago—immediately after the massacre of Parker's Fort—she had been anxious for the same."[7] Although welcomed home by her family, she attempted to escape numerous times and had to be watched closely.

Many of the married women who were captives had seen their husbands or children killed. Some had to leave their children behind with their captors. The younger captives had seen their mothers and fathers killed during the attack upon their home or wagon train. These captives often then returned to no family and had no means to support themselves. Dolly Webster, although reunited with her husband, left one child dead and another still captive among the Comanche. After her captivity with the Sioux, Urania White was reunited with her husband and her children who had survived the attack and captivity, but they found themselves among strangers and with very little money. Their possessions, valued at nearly three thousand dollars, had

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[6]James De Shields, 31-32.

[7]Ibid., 44.

been either destroyed or taken by the Sioux. The townspeople aided them, and the Whites were not charged for room or board and they were even given a small sum of money by the landlady. They did not return to their home in Minnesota until nearly a three years after the Sioux attack.

Some captives were mistaken for native as they encountered whites for the first time. Jannette De Camp Sweet stated "we all looked more or less like aboriginals."[8] After townspeople realized that the woman they thought native was in fact Dolly Webster, she was warmly received and her "Indian garb" was "replaced with a suit of Ladies clothes." She and her son were further given enough clothes, she stated, to last a year, and the two were well fed. "I then gave them a short narrative of my capture and escape; the room was crowded, until nearly twelve o'clock, every one anxious to hear all they could."[9] Townswomen gave Dolly Webster ninety dollars and the men presented her with nearly four hundred dollars. She then went on to Austin, Texas with her son, where nothing else is known of her. Other returned captives, such as Mary Schwandt, testified to a commission concerning her family's property, all of which was lost, but she stated she never received anything in compensation as others had. Others took part in the

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[8]Captivities of Mrs. De Camp Sweet, Nancy McClure, and Mary Schwandt, 377.

[9]Benjamin Dolbeare, 33.

military commission which was held at the outcome of the Sioux Uprising to determine the guilty parties involved, and a number noted with displeasure that only thirty-nine of the hundreds accused of participation in the uprising were executed. Mary Schwandt testified before both a military and a claims commission. While she noted she could not bring herself to give the particulars of her military testimony she stated the U. S. government decided to "suspend the annuities usually paid the Sioux, and directed that the money should be paid to the people whose property had been destroyed by the Indians during the outbreak . . . ."[10] Abigail Gardiner, a young girl at the time of her captivity among the Sioux, was placed in a seminary to complete her education upon her return; her expenses were provided by philanthropic individuals. Lavinia Eastlick was also aided financially. The governor gave her fifteen dollars for fare for herself and her two children to get to Ohio where she lived with friends. Sarah Wakefield, who empathized with the Sioux Indian's plight, and who knew many of the natives within the village was chided by whites upon release for her actions both while captive and after. Mary Schwandt had noted that when she saw Sarah Wakefield during captivity she appeared comfortable with her captors and even enjoyed her situation.

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[10]Captivities of Mrs. De Camp Sweet, Nancy McClure, and Mary Schwandt, 473.

Sarah Wakefield testified on the behalf of one of her captors who she stated was unjustly accused of murders during the attack and after. "They [former captives and soldiers] thought it very strange that I could speak in favor of an Indian."[11] Others said she was in love with this man, that she had become his wife and that she preferred him to her own husband. In her own defense she stated "I could never love a savage, although I could respect any or all that might befriend me."[12]

Whatever the narratives lack in description of the captives' return one would have to imagine that they were filled with both great joy and much anxiety. Family members and townspeople who knew of the reported treatment of female captives could not help but look upon the newly returned captives with some wonder. And the returned captives, whether they returned willingly or by force, must surely have known some sleepless nights and concern over not only what they had already experienced but what their futures would hold.

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[11]Sarah Wakefield, 51.

[12]Ibid., 55.

CHAPTER VII

THE VIEW OF THE FRONTIER AND THE INDIAN

> Much has been said of the noble traits of the Indian character, but, notwithstanding, observation has confirmed our opinion that there has been a mistake somewhere.[1]

> The Indians were as respectful towards me as any white man would be towards a lady; and now, when I hear all the Indians abused, it aggravates me, for I know some are as manly, honest, and noble, as our own race.[2]

These two views of the "Indian" come from the disparate experiences of the two authors. Their captivities, although both among the Sioux, took place at different periods of time and under different circumstances. Looking through the captivity narratives-written by women, a number of interesting perceptions of the frontier and the "Indian" emerge. The views are as diverse as the women who wrote the narratives. Some saw the frontier and the westward movement as both good and inevitable. Others blamed their husbands' drive westward towards "progress" as a negative force, and the cause of their captivities. The "Indian," too, was viewed from distinct perspectives. While some women empathized with the native's problems and were able to see natives as individuals, to other women "Indians"

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[1]Sarah Larimer, 128.

[2]Sarah Wakefield, 29.

were viewed with a prejudiced eye and seen as a group rather than individual tribes. These women's views were in large part constructed before they ever encountered native Americans and were rarely altered by their captive experiences.

Many women commented on the landscape as they journeyed to their captors' villages. While they noted the beauty of the landscape they often spoke of the land as a savage wilderness, using terms similar terms similar to those they used in describing their captors. Sarah Larimer described the countryside at length and noted that the "scenery was terribly wild," and an isolated wilderness.[3] Others also noted that although their situation was at the time somewhat tenuous and threatening, they could not help but notice the beauty of their surroundings.

Some female captives also spoke of their views of "progress." While some narratives, such as Fanny Kelly's and Sarah Larimer's, were almost testimonies to the positive aspects of progress and technology, others spoke more harshly of the westward movement. Often it was felt that if not for the drive of their husbands for better land, these women would not have found themselves in their captive situation. Dolly Webster commented it was "the ungovernable propensity for the accumulation of wealth, and the change of

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[3]Sarah Larimer, 60.

circumstances, ever predominant in the breast of man" that caused her husband to leave his home and take his family to Texas, where her captivity took place.[4] The author of Abigail Gardiner's narrative also commented on the apparent drive of many Americans who "seem to believe that because it may seem good for some to 'go West,' it is best for each one of us to go farthest West of all, . . ."[5]

Although female captives had varying backgrounds and diverse experiences among native Americans, their perceptions of native Americans were often very similar. Even before they ventured west or had been taken captive women saw the native American through the descriptions of previous brutalities and alleged atrocities they had read about or heard. Whole communities even acted upon these reports of apparent atrocities, building blockades and bolstering troops, and even leaving their homes, where there was little or no reason.[6] There are exceptions to the negative perception of the native American. Sarah Wakefield strongly empathized with her captors' situation. She said the native women she lived with "seemed like friends, and they proved to be good, true friends."[7] She viewed her

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[4]Benjamin Dolbeare, 2.

[5]L. P. Lee, 8.

[6]Glenda Riley, Frontierswomen: The Iowa Experience, Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1981, 178.

[7]Sarah Wakefield, 19.

captors as individuals, some were compassionate and kind, and some were not. She testified for one Sioux warrior after her release and stated that "God will reward him in Heaven for his acts of kindness."[8] She further felt that "all the evil habits that the Indian has acquired may be laid to the traders," who went among the natives before there were any settlements, and brought liquor as well as their own evil ways.[9] Sarah Wakefield apparently paid for her views with a certain degree of ostracism from the other female captives and even from the soldiers who heard of her actions while captive and her later testimony. Sophia Huggins expressed similar views, and noted that "the majority seemed disposed to be friendly, and the women for a wonder, and were even respectful."[10] She had even been warned to leave her home before the attack by some of the Sioux women, and upon her release "they exchanged affectionate farewells, for both parties had learned to respect and love one another."[11] Wilhemina Carrigan also viewed her captors with affection. Seven years old at the time of her captivity, she had seen her family killed by the Sioux and was pleased to see two Sioux women she recognized

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[8]Ibid., 28.

[9]Ibid., 7.

[10]Mrs. Huggins, the Minnesota Captive, 7.

[11]Ibid., 13-14.

among her captors. They seemed to sense her fright and protected her throughout her captivity. She stated "it seems wrong for me to call these two Indian women squaws, for they were as lady-like as any white women and I shall never forget them."[12] Mary Barber married a Sioux chief and went among the Sioux to help Christianize them and it was not until she arrived back in the Sioux village that she realized her efforts would be ill spent. She felt strongly that it was the white man's liquor that caused much of the problems between native and white and that liquor was the cause of most of the murders committed by the natives. Olive Oatman and Cynthia Parker would also apparently have had favorable opinions of their captors. Both women married native men and after their return to their families they attempted to return to their former captors. If their narratives did not strongly reflect these sentiments it is because neither wrote her own narrative, and the authors were men, who used the narratives to varying degrees as a means of propaganda to display the cruelty of native Americans. It may be important, too, that many of the favorable views came from women who had been young at the time of their initial captivity, and some remained for many years among their captor tribe.

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[12]Wilhemina Carrigan, 19.

While some of the narratives describe these favorable perceptions many more reveal the negative image of native Americans. Fanny Kelly, taken captive while travelling west with her husband, commented on the kindness and friendship of some of her captors, and noted "there is a wide difference in the moral character of Indians."[13] In her final analysis, though, she stated she was pleased that "the day of retributive justice came to some of the bloodthirsty savages."[14] Sarah Larimer, also taken captive while travelling west, noted that although she had been told of the noble character of the Indian

> subsequent observation would reveal gross indolence, uncleanliness, ignorance, deception, and cruelty . . . he, in truth, too often embodies the most repulsive, lazy, and unprincipled habits and attributes.[15]

From her experience she felt that it was the natives' indolence and ignorance which caused the decline of their nation.[16]

Jannette De Camp Sweet viewed native Americans as childish, and stated that previous to her captivity she "had lived among them on terms of friendly intimacy . . . ."[17]

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[13]Fanny Kelly, 404.

[14]Ibid., 426.

[15]Sarah Larimer, 128.

[16]Ibid., 219.

[17]Captivities of Mrs. De Camp Sweet, Nancy McClure, and Mary Schwandt, 355.

During times when there was little food, she and her husband distributed food among the Sioux. She felt later that act of charity saved her life when she was captive. She commented that once the uprising had begun "the instinct of the savage had been fully aroused and blood and plunder was their only desire."[18] Mary Schwandt, captive along with Jannette De Camp Sweet, also stated that the Sioux visited the settlement often. She felt "their ways" were "so strange that they were disagreeable to" her but in time she became accustomed to them, and had no fear of the Sioux during their visits.[19]

Ann Coleson saw very few redeeming qualities and stated that she had

> each day a feeling of deeper disgust with all that I saw. The men were brutal, while the most deplorable want of chastity characterized the women. Even the little children were deficient in the usual graces and sweetness of childhood . . . .[20]

Some captives were able to understand that there were cultural differences between the various tribes, and realized that not all the "Indians" were savage and brutal. Sarah Larimer noted "I can but say Indians in one tribe are much like those in another, bearing a marked resemblance in

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[18]Ibid., 360.

[19]Ibid., 462.

[20]Miss Coleson's Narrative, 36.

habits and customs."[21] This in many ways was not an uncommon view. For the most part these narratives echo the then existing views of native Americans and reaffirmed white sentiments. Their views were rarely changed by their captivities, if anything they were reinforced. These anti-Indian attitudes had been cultivated since the colonial period and women's views, with few exceptions, accepted the white biases.

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[21]Sarah Larimer, 245.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CAPTIVITY NARRATIVE: MYTH AND REALITY

In Regeneration Through Violence and The Fatal Environment Richard Slotkin has developed the idea of the captivity narrative as the first truly American form of mythology. This perspective is an important guideline with which to look at captivity narratives. Nineteenth century narratives especially must be viewed as a mixture of both fact and fiction, some were far more fiction than fact. By the middle of the nineteenth century captivity narratives were largely fictional, meant to entertain, arouse anti-Indian sentiments, and not unimportantly, to make a profit. The Sioux Uprising of 1862 is marked as the beginning of the Plains Wars which continued until 1891. It is then not surprising that there was a proliferation of captivity narratives written during this period that promoted hatred of the Sioux in particular and native Americans in general.

Numerous fictional narratives were written as well during the nineteenth century. They were often based upon actual captivities and borrowed liberally from actual captivity experiences. Rachel Plummer's narrative of her captivity among the Comanche in 1836, included here, became

the basis for Clarissa Plummer and Caroline Harris' fictional narratives. This was not an isolated instance. Some authors who had been captives occasionally used entire passages from other narratives. While the narratives were all generally based on at least some truths one must be cautious in using them as accurate portrayals of frontier events. It is important though, that their nineteenth-century audience read them as truthful documents of actual experiences among the Indians.

Although the captivity narrative changed in details and motivations it changed little in its basic form from the seventeenth century onward. These narratives evolved from primarily spiritual allegories to secular and fictional "penny dreadfuls," but they continued to contain the same essential elements involving the removal into the "savage" wilderness and the eventual redemption or return to "civilized" society. Women were perceived to embodied "civilized" life and needed protection from the contamination of the savage and the wilderness he inhabited. From Puritan times there was a fear that the white captive would "turn savage" and not just fail to return but not wish to return to "civilized" society.

> When applied to women, such fears became even more virulent in their expression, suggesting a culture that felt itself more profoundly threatened by the specter of the white woman—as opposed to the white man—gone savage.[1]

The captivity narratives often described native customs and lifestyle, and they give insight into the current events of their times, but they cannot be considered wholly accurate sources of information. The details given within the narratives are often exaggerated or misinterpreted and cannot always be trusted. The narratives often reveal more about their authors than they do historical facts. The authors could not help but be aware to some extent of the impact of their narratives. Captives wrote their narratives to inform other travelers, for their children and future generations that they might know the experiences the captives went through, and certainly some published their narratives purely for financial reasons, knowing the popularity of the genre. The narratives of both men and women "reveal an awareness of writing for posterity, stressing" the danger of their captivities, " alerting others to the plight of other Indian captives," and hoping their readers would remove the native threat and continue to

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[1]Annette Kolodny, The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experiences of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 56.

push civilization westward.[2]

Roy Harvey Pearce stated that the captivity narrative is "to be understood as [the] experience of the Frontier Mind . . . ."[3] If this is in fact true it must be noted that the "Frontier Mind" was not a static entity but shifted as American events, issues, and culture shifted. The experiences mentioned in the narratives, whether fact or fiction were worked up into something much more than the sum of the experiences described. The events detailed in these narratives <u>can</u> be an important addition to the body of information known concerning native Americans and white American women of the nineteenth century, but more importantly the narratives present us with nineteenth-century ideas of the "Indian" and women's frontier lives. What may be most surprising is that they were <u>not</u> uniformly negative views and as anti-Indian as one might have expected. Frontier women were often on close terms with native Americans, dealing with them on a day to day basis, aiding them when possible and having at least some understanding of the pressures placed on the native by the white man. Others, though, expressed the views one expects more often to hear, and their narratives only promoted the negative views and hatred of the native American. These

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[2]Glenda Riley, <u>Women and Indians on the Frontier</u>, 179-80.

[3]Roy Harvey Pearce, 1.

narratives, certainly more numerous, show their limited understanding of native cultures, and the effects that the white migration into native territories was causing. This is of course not to say that many of the tribes did not commit acts that could be considered brutal, but the narratives are not just a recounting of experiences; but they are a reinterpretation of events that together form a valuable body of information on a portion of nineteenth-century American society generally kept silent.

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